

# ***ALL CREATURES, WORSHIP GOD MOST HIGH***

A Worship & Preaching Resource for Season of Creation Year C

Published by –



Northern Illinois Synod (ELCA)  
**Creation Care Committee**



# Introduction

Dear Colleagues,

If this is the first time you've looked at one of Northern Illinois Synod's "Season of Creation" resource booklets, welcome! If you have already read and utilized the resources of the last two years, welcome back! Whatever your situation, I am overjoyed to present to you *All Creatures, Worship God Most High: A Worship & Preaching Resource for Season of Creation Year C*. I truly hope that you find this resource helpful and it encourages your congregation to celebrate "Season of Creation" sometime this year.

These resources have come in response to a resolution that was adopted by the 2018 Northern Illinois Synod Assembly which encourages the congregations of the NIS to make the Season of Creation a regular part of their liturgical year. We have now completed a unique resource for each of the three years of the lectionary cycle. The lectionary this year not only calls us to love and care for our neighbors throughout Creation<sup>1</sup>, but also calls us to join the rest of Creation as we turn to God with thanks and praise (see especially Psalm 148, assigned for Cosmos Sunday), thus we have named it after the hymn "All Creatures, Worship God Most High."

*All Creatures, Worship God Most High* was created by a group of leaders from the Northern Illinois Synod who gathered at a working retreat early this year. We all agree that living within and among the rest of Creation with justice, peace, and harmony is an integral part of our life of faith. We see other parts of Creation, both living and non-living, as our neighbors to be served and with whom we are to join in praise of the Creator. When the Psalmist calls upon the sun, the moon, and the stars, as well as the mountains, the cedar trees, and the wild beasts, along with all peoples, young and old alike, to give praise to God (Psalm 148), we take that literally.

We are committed to fostering these convictions in our own communities of faith and encouraging other congregations to do so as well. We see no more appropriate way to do so than to focus on them within the primary activity of our congregations – worship. The Church begins its Creed with, "I believe in God the Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth." Season of Creation allows us an opportunity to dig deeper into this foundational belief, at least for a four-week period of the year.

As a preacher and worship planner, creating *All Creatures, Worship God Most High* has been a wonderful gift. I have been putting together Creation-focused worship services since I was ordained in 1998 and have been celebrating Season of Creation with my congregations since 2011. That, however, was a solo activity for many years. I did not have a text study group with whom I could grapple with the texts and discuss related matters of worship. Working with a group of colleagues as we put this resource together filled that gap. With *All Creatures, Worship God Most High* we hope to include you in our conversations and encourage conversations of your own with your neighbors and within your congregations.

The collaborative team that authored *All Creatures, Worship God Most High: A Worship & Preaching Resource for Season of Creation Year C* was put together by the Northern Illinois Synod Creation Care Committee. This team gathered virtually (you can find the participants at the end of this resource) from January 31 – February 3 to produce the document you have before you.

This resource contains many wonderful things. It is a true work of collaboration by a very compassionate and talented group of people. I can speak for all of them in saying that we pray that your congregations will grow in faith through celebrating the Season of Creation. So, please read on to discover many ideas and means of joining all creatures in worshipping our God most high!

Yours in Christ,

**Rev. Jeff Schlesinger**  
Pastor, Heart of Illinois Lutheran Parish  
Season of Creation Retreat Coordinaton

---

<sup>1</sup> We capitalize the terms Creation and Earth to denote the level of respect we are affording the other-than-human world, thereby treating these entities as subjects rather than objects. This is especially important when considering how Creation and Earth are a subject, or character, in the biblical narrative and, thus, in our liturgy and preaching.

## What is Season of Creation?

The Season of Creation is an optional season that can be inserted into many different parts of the church year. Developed by three ecotheologians, Season of Creation was first imagined by Norman Habel in Australia and then further developed in cooperation with David Rhoads and H. Paul Santmire of the United States. Churches that use the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) follow the life of Jesus through the seasons of the church year. During ordinary time the focus is on the Spirit's action in the Church. But there is not a specific time to focus on God the Creator. As Habel et al say, "Now it is time to turn our attention to God's relationship with all creation and with our relationship with creation (and with God through creation.)"<sup>2</sup> They go on to say, "[The Season of Creation] brings the celebration of Earth fully into the orbit of Christian worship as a natural and integral part of the church year."<sup>3</sup>

As the Season of Creation was developed in the early 2000's, a lectionary of pericopes was created for each year of the three-year cycle of the RCL. Following is the lectionary presented in this resource for Season of Creation year C:

Week	Theme	1 <sup>st</sup> Lesson	Psalm	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lesson	Gospel
SOC 1(C)	Ocean and Lake Sunday	Job 38:1-18	Psalm 104:1-9, 24-26	Rev 16:1-9* and/or 19:6-8*	Luke 5:1-11
SOC 2(C)	Animal Sunday	Job 39:1-8, 26-30	Psalm 104:14-23	Revelation 5:1-10*	Luke 12:22-31
SOC 3(C)	Storm & Weather Sunday	Job 28:20-27	Psalm 29	Revelation 4:1-8*	Luke 8:22-25
SOC 4(C)	Cosmos Sunday	Proverbs 8:22-31	Psalm 148	Colossians 1:15-20	Luke 24:44-53*

Close inspection of the table above will reveal differences from the lectionary presented in *Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary*. The first differences are in the names of a couple of the Sundays. We expanded the first week to include lakes as well as oceans. This was done purely for contextual reasons. Though oceans have a much broader effect on Creation as a whole, people from Northern Illinois are far removed from their shores and are much more accustomed to spending time along the Great Lakes and other large inland lakes. The general reference to weather was added to Storm Sunday to make an explicit tie to weather related phenomenon such as cold and heat waves, natural wildfires, drought, etc.

The second difference is marked by asterisks. There are lessons outlined in *Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary* for which the team recommends alternatives. This recommendation was made with careful discernment and following agreed upon guidelines.<sup>4</sup> In the end, the team felt that since the SOC lectionary is topical, if they were thoughtful and responsible, it was within their purview to suggest these alternatives.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary*. Norman C. Habel, David Rhoads, and Paul Santmire, Editors. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011) p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5. (For a nice list of reasons why to have a Season of Creation read the section **Why a Season of Creation?** pp. 5-7.)

<sup>4</sup> The team of pastors that created this resource developed the following protocol in regards to the pericopes of the Season of Creation lectionary:

### **Pericope Protocol**

We are thankful for the scholars who have put together the lectionary for Season of Creation (SOC). Because it was constructed with themes in mind and not with sequential and seasonal structure as more traditional lectionaries such as the RCL and the Narrative Lectionary, we will do the following as we create our resource for the SOC:

- Suggest alternative texts for preachers and worship leaders to consider for each given Sunday
- Assign alternative texts for those Sundays when the following criteria are met:
  - There is no explicit reference of the day's theme within the text, and/or
  - We are unable to discern a solid connection between the pericope put forth by the authors of *Season of Creation* and the theme of the day or the other assigned texts for the day, and
  - There is consensus among the retreat group to assign an alternative text for the day.

The changes we have recommended illustrate our struggles with the second lessons for this year. As we began to explore alternative texts we might consider, a mini series utilizing texts from John of Patmos' Revelation emerged.

<sup>5</sup> And the team also hopes that Habel, Rhoads and Santmire will not feel offended by its boldness but rather feel that it is building upon and expanding the work of these three well respected scholars.

## **When Should a Congregation Celebrate Season of Creation?**

There is no right or wrong answer to when a congregation might begin and end the four-week Season of Creation. It isn't even necessary to be consistent from one year to the next.

Perhaps the most common time that congregations celebrate Season of Creation is during September. By doing this, the four weeks of September can serve as the four Sundays of the season and everything can be concluded by celebrating St. Francis of Assisi Day the first Sunday of October.<sup>6</sup>

But one is certainly not bound to these dates. The Season of Creation can appropriately be celebrated during the Easter season. A congregation could consider adapting it to use as a Lenten series. Some congregations have spread the weeks of the season throughout the church year (i.e. celebrating on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday for four consecutive months). At least one Northern Illinois Synod dubbed July their "Season of Creation Month," while another congregation in the synod did all three years of seasons in one summer at their midweek services.

## **Using This Resource**

If you have looked ahead in this resource, you will find five major sections: a liturgy for the season and then a set of resources for each of the four Sundays of Season of Creation year C.

### Liturgy

The main liturgy<sup>7</sup> is intended to follow the typical order and flow used by ELCA Lutherans who rely on the ELW as their main worship guide. Prayers of the Day are also included in this resource, but they are printed alongside the hymn suggestions in the materials for the individual Sundays.

There is a second liturgy that mimics one we included with last year's resource – "A Service of Lessons, Carols, and Reflections." This service is designed to be used as an introduction or conclusion to the season as well as a onetime service at other times of the year. It can easily be adapted to include communion.

### Sunday Resources

Individual materials for each Sunday of year C have been developed. You are free to use and alter any and all of them as you see fit. There are four main sections for each Sunday: The Lessons, Seeds from the Texts, Fruits for Preaching, Hymn Suggestions and Other Suggestions.

### Lessons

The lessons are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible unless otherwise noted. The introductory sentence in italics offers context and/or a lens through which to consider the text. The Psalms utilize the ELW translation.

---

<sup>6</sup> St. Francis of Assisi Day is actually October 4. In addition, these dates work well as September 1 is "Creation Day" as decreed in 1999 by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I of Constantinople. He said it as a time to offer "prayers and supplications to the Maker of all, both as thanksgiving for the great gift of creation and as a petition for its protections and salvation." (Habel et al, p. 7.)

<sup>7</sup> A copy of the liturgy as a Microsoft Word document has been included for download at [www.nisynod/creation](http://www.nisynod/creation) to make it more convenient to copy and paste the material.

### Seeds from the Text

This section offers quotes and thoughts of the members of the team as they discussed the pericopes. The hope is that these “seeds” might get you thinking and will “sprout” a sermon for you. There is not a name assigned to these items, but they are actual quotes or paraphrases of real comments made by team members. Should you find it appropriate to use these seeds verbatim or paraphrased in your sermon and wish to give credit, please feel free to use something like, “A colleague said...” or “A friend of mine told me...”

### Fruits for Preaching

This section contains illustrations, inspirations, and other outside resources that might be used within a sermon. Every effort has been made to offer a solid reference in case you find it necessary to cite, to dig deeper, or to verify.

### Hymn Suggestions and More

The final page for each Sunday contains a chart with suggested hymns and a Prayer of the Day for the given Sunday. The code for the hymn resources appears below. In addition, there are suggestions offered for Children’s messages, service projects, field trips and activities, and whatever ideas the team thought would enhance the given Sunday.

#### Hymn Resource Key

ELW – Evangelical Lutheran Worship  
ACS – All Creation Sings  
WOV – With One Voice  
LBW – Lutheran Book of Worship  
W&P – Worship and Praise

} ELCA Resources

SFNC – Songs for a New Creation (out of print, Augsburg Publishing House)  
HAB1 – Habel Hymns Volume 1: Songs for Celebrating with Creation by Norman C Habel. (Copyright 2004 by Norman C. Habel, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Administered by Willow Connections Pty Ltd, Brookvale, NSW – Australia)  
HAB3 – Habel Hymns Volume 3: Songs to Explore the Mystery of Evolution and Ecology by Norman C Habel. (Copyright 2012 by Norman C. Habel. Not yet published.)

## Seasonal Liturgy - Season of Creation (C)

### Litany/Call to Worship

- God, you have claimed us in baptism through the waters of Creation:  
**we join the Atlantic and Pacific, the Great Lakes and [your local lake here], in giving you thanks and praise.**
- God, you have called us to live in unity and love with our neighbors:  
**we join in worship with all creatures that walk, crawl, slither, fly, or swim.**
- God, you nourish the earth with water and snow, and till the soil with frost and thaw:  
**we come before you to be cultivated by your Word.**
- God, the planets and solar systems and galaxies belong to you:  
**we come before you with great humility, amazed that you are even mindful of us.**

### Thanksgiving For Baptism

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God,  
who forms the Earth,  
redeems all Creation,  
and sustains life. **Amen.**

God of tempest, God of whirlwind,  
in the beginning when the Earth was formless,  
your Spirit swept over the waters.  
You spoke, and the wind of your Word fashioned order:  
darkness and light; sea and sky and soil;  
sun and moon; birds and fish; creatures, plants, and people;  
and with a word, you took delight.

**You looked upon your Creation and called it good.**

After you poured out the floods of judgment,  
you set your bow in the clouds,  
a promise to every living creature that water is life.  
You spoke, and the sky sang with all the colors of your covenant:  
for cardinals and foxes, bumblebees and tortoises, Noah and his family,  
and all descendants of your first act of redemption.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

**We marvel at your Creation, for it is good!**

At Jacob's well, the woman from Samaria  
witnessed the water of eternal life from your beloved Son.  
In baptism, your Spirit brings water to life.  
You speak, and your children are born  
from the womb of your mercy.

You wrap us in the grace of your never-ending love  
and raise us to share that love with all you have made.

**You look upon your Creation and call us good.**

Forgiven in the waters of baptism,

**We praise you, Creator of all things.**

**We worship you, Redeemer of all that lives.**

**We serve you, Sustainer of your people in every land. Amen.**

## **Confession & Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
who forms the Earth,  
redeems all Creation,  
and sustains life. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin as we admit the ways we have failed to love God's good Creation.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Restoring God,

**we confess that we have sent our plastic and chemical waste into the waters.  
We have caused so many species to become endangered or extinct.  
Our choices have caused storms to increase in severity  
and weather patterns to become unstable.  
We exploit the cosmos for our own gain.  
We despair at what we have done and yet feel helpless.  
Save us from ourselves!  
Forgive us and renew us, loving God.  
Reveal to us your love for every creature.  
Inspire us to protect your bountiful Creation. Amen.**

By the grace of Jesus Christ, God forgives you of your sin † and you are made whole. Freed from your burden of despair, be led by the Spirit to do God's restorative work in the world. **Amen.**

## **Hymn of Praise**

We offer three suggestions for hymn of praise for the season:

- Use "All Creatures, Worship God Most High" – ELW 835
  - *Choose between verses 1-4*
- Use "God Filled the Oceans" sung to the tune *Tenderness* (ELW 739):

God the Creator filled up the oceans  
in the first days of this wonderful world.  
Then God gave life to critters upon land  
Swimming in vast seas, and all who take flight.

The sun and bright moon along with night stars  
sing out to you, God, all praise be your name.  
We join the raindrops, thunder and lightning,  
Raising our voices in Alleluia!

*(Words written by Jeff Schlesinger. Permission granted by author to print the words in bulletin or for projection as long as it is being used for worship or another function of the congregation.)*
- Use a different one for each Sunday:
  - Ocean & Lake Sunday – "Let All Things Now Living" ELW 881 (v. 2)
  - Animal Sunday – "When Long Before Time" ELW 861 (v. 1-3) or "All God's Critters" SFNC 2
  - Storm & Weather Sunday – "Earth and All Stars" ELW 731 (v. 1)
  - Cosmos Sunday – "Joyous Light of Heavenly Glory" ELW 561 (v. 3)

## Propers

### **Ocean & Lake Sunday**

#### Prayer of the Day

Creator God, we are in awe of the majesty and mystery of the oceans and lakes. They provide a home to living things both small and great, from plankton to Leviathan. Show us our place in your great Creation so that we live with humility and respect for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen.**

#### Readings

1<sup>st</sup> Reading – Job 38:1-18

Psalm 104:1-9, 24-26

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – Revelation 16:1-9 and/or 19:6-8

Gospel – Luke 5:1-11

### **Animal Sunday**

#### Prayer of the Day

God our Creator and Provider, you feed the birds of the air and clothe the flowers of the field. Show us how we interfere with natural habitats and the good they provide for all Creation. Refocus our efforts to better partner with your restoring ways. Bless animal habitats and nature preserves so that they may continue to provide for all in the interwoven web of life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen**

#### Readings

1<sup>st</sup> Reading – Job 39:1-8, 26-30

Psalm 104:14-23

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – Revelation 5:1-10

Gospel – Luke 12:22-31

### **Storm & Weather Sunday**

#### Prayer of the Day

Lord of tempest and calm, your voice thunders throughout all Creation. The power of storms both frighten and fascinate. Give us faith to trust you in challenging moments as we receive your comfort and peace, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

#### Readings

1<sup>st</sup> Reading – Job 28:20-27

Psalm 29

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – Revelation 4:1-8

Gospel – Luke 8:22-25

### **Cosmos Sunday**

#### Prayer of the Day

God of the Cosmos, your Son and Spirit were present in the beginning. Your creative touch includes the Earth and the farthest reaches of the universe. Give us humility to understand our place in Creation and assurance that you love us even when we feel insignificant. In the name of the Triune God. **Amen.**

#### Readings

1<sup>st</sup> Reading – Proverbs 8:22-31

Psalm 148

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – Colossians 1:15-20

Gospel – Luke 24:44-53

### **Offering Prayer**

Sovereign of the universe, you set the parameters of the sea and renew the earth with light from the ages and rain from the heavens. Receive the gifts we bring as we care for oceans, lakes, and all habitats, to the glory of God in the name of Christ our peace. **Amen.**

## **Preface**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,  
that we should at all times and in all places  
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,  
through our Savior Jesus Christ;  
who orders the cosmos, sets the waters' boundaries, gives the  
breath of life to all creatures great and small, and empowers  
storms to wash over and renew the Earth.  
And so, with all the choirs of angels,  
with the church on Earth and the hosts of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

*use whichever Holy, Holy you prefer*

## **Thanksgiving at the Table**

Holy One, your throne is centered in the midst of all Creation, the very source of all life, and from which comes all restoration.

Blessed are you for quasars and pulsars, for novas and nebulas, for distant galaxies and nearby asteroids. Blessed are you for the mysteries of the cosmos and the wonder it inspires as we contemplate our smallness against the vastness in which our island Earth floats.

Blessed are you for whales and krill, for eagles and sparrows, for tigers and meerkats. Blessed are you for the diversity of life and the joy it offers as we consider our place alongside all animals with whom we share our ecosphere.

Blessed are you for vast oceans and small ponds, for the Great Lakes and salty seas, for beaver dams and coral reefs. Blessed are you for all sources of water and the thrill they provide as we celebrate our dependence on water for work, play, and quenching our daily thirst.

Blessed are you for lightning and wind, for hailstone and snowflake, for raindrop and rainbow. Blessed are you for the fascination of storms and the power they display as we fathom our reliance on weather patterns that bring cleansing and renewing gifts to Earth.

Blessed are you for Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, through whom all things have come into existence and through whom all things will receive rebirth.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

With this bread and cup, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Almighty Provider, this meal reminds us that the consequence of sin is brokenness, yet in the resurrection of the Lamb, what was once broken is now being healed. Fill us with urgency to be agents of that healing. Unite us through the bread and cup we share, that trusting your redemptive work in all Creation, we may be better partners of renewal as we await our Lord's return.

All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of the Cosmos, breath of life, source of nature's power, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

### **Communion Blessing**

The bread of the earth and the fruit of the vine strengthen you and keep you in God's grace.  
**Amen.**

### **Prayer after Communion**

Let us pray. In this meal of bread and wine, we are reminded of our place within Creation. We are merely one piece of a diverse landscape which you dream into existence every day. Send us now filled with your goodness, striving for the better world you envision, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **Benediction**

The God of all Creation bless you.  
The God of stars and tides keep watch over you.  
The God of light and love bring you and all Creation peace.  
In the name of the + Triune God. **Amen.**

*or*

The God of all Creation:  
of oceans and lakes,  
of prairie dogs and moose,  
of spring rains and winter squalls,  
of Pluto and Mars,  
bless, keep, and strengthen you and all Creation,  
today, tomorrow, and always.  
In the name of the + Triune God. **Amen**

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Care for Creation.  
**Thanks be to God.**

## A Service of Readings, Carols, and Reflections

*This service captures all the themes of Season of Creation Year C and is designed to be used to introduce or conclude the Season of Creation. It incorporates pieces of liturgy from above and can easily be altered for a communion service.*

### Litany/Call to Worship

- God, you have claimed us in baptism through the waters of Creation:  
**we join the Atlantic and Pacific, the Great Lakes and [your local lake here], in giving you thanks and praise.**
- God, you have called us to live in unity and love with our neighbors:  
**we join in worship with all creatures that walk, crawl, slither, fly, or swim.**
- God, you nourish the earth with water and snow, and till the soil with frost and thaw:  
**we come before you to be cultivated by your Word.**
- God, the planets and solar systems and galaxies belong to you:  
**we come before you with great humility, amazed that you are even mindful of us.**

### Thanksgiving For Baptism

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God,  
who forms the Earth,  
redeems all Creation,  
and sustains life. **Amen.**

God of tempest, God of whirlwind,  
in the beginning when the Earth was formless,  
your Spirit swept over the waters.  
You spoke, and the wind of your Word fashioned order:  
darkness and light; sea and sky and soil;  
sun and moon; birds and fish; creatures, plants, and people;  
and with a word, you took delight.

**You looked upon your Creation and called it good.**

After you poured out the floods of judgment,  
you set your bow in the clouds,  
a promise to every living creature that water is life.  
You spoke, and the sky sang with all the colors of your covenant:  
for cardinals and foxes, bumblebees and tortoises, Noah and his family,  
and all descendants of your first act of redemption.  
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

**We marvel at your Creation, for it is good!**

At Jacob's well, the woman from Samaria  
witnessed the water of eternal life from your beloved Son.  
In baptism, your Spirit brings water to life.  
You speak, and your children are born  
from the womb of your mercy.  
You wrap us in the grace of your never-ending love  
and raise us to share that love with all you have made.

**You look upon your Creation and call us good.**

Forgiven in the waters of baptism,  
**We praise you, Creator of all things.**  
**We worship you, Redeemer of all that lives.**  
**We serve you, Sustainer of your people in every land. Amen.**

## Readings, Carols, and Reflections

### Cosmos

- Reading – Colossians 1:15-20
- Reflection
  - Create a video showing images of sun, moon, stars, and clouds with Psalm 148:3-4 narrated slowly and deliberately as it plays
  - The images could be collected ahead of time from members of your worshipping community
  - See an example of this in the resources folder online – [www.nisynod/creation](http://www.nisynod/creation).
- Cosmos Prayer

God of the Cosmos, your Son and Spirit were present in the beginning. Your creative touch includes the Earth and the farthest reaches of the universe. Give us humility to understand our place in Creation and assurance that you love us even when we feel insignificant. In the name of the Triune God. **Amen.**
- Song – “God Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens” – ELW 771 (v. 1 & 4)

### Storm & Weather

- Reading – Job 28:20-27
- Reflection – “The Eternal Raindrop”
  - Begin with a guided meditation inviting listeners to imagine themselves on a hot day to reach out and catch a raindrop
  - Reflect on the fact that this small drop of water will always be
    - Water on this planet is a closed system
    - This drop of water will remain as part of this earth in some manner...
      - Ground water, or maybe sink deep into an underground well
      - Ingested by human or other animal
      - Flow into a creek or river and make its way back to the ocean which is likely where it began
- Storm & Weather Prayer

Lord of tempest and calm, your voice thunders throughout all Creation. The power of storms both frighten and fascinate. Give us faith to trust you in challenging moments as we receive your comfort and peace, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**
- Song – “God of the Sparrow” – ELW 740 (v. 1-3)

### Ocean & Lake

- Reading – Psalm 104:1-9, 24-26
- Reflection – “Many Faces of the Ocean”
  - Serene Face – glassy water reflecting the sunrise/sunset
  - Happy Face – children playing in the waves on the beach
  - Angry Face – waves crashing against the shore, tossing ships and boats to and fro
  - Adventurous Face – those waves on a sunny day spell joy for surfers
  - Joyous Face – Whales and dolphins swimming gracefully, sea otters and harbor seals looking like they’re at play as they go about their business
  - Giving Face – A fisherman sits on a dock reels in a meal for his family, a salmon boat brings a load to market, and a hot day sends water vapor into the sky to form clouds that will water the earth thousands of miles away
  - God has imprinted all of these faces on the waters of the earth – the water that brings us life. Is it any wonder that it is also water through which God brings us into Christ’s family?
- Ocean and Lake Prayer

Creator God, we are in awe of the majesty and mystery of the oceans and lakes. They provide a home to living things both small and great, from plankton to Leviathan. Show us our place in your great Creation so that we live with humility and respect for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen.**
- Song – “Crashing Waters at Creation” ELW 455 (v. 1 & 4)

## Animal

- Reading – Job 39:1-8, 26-30
- Reflection – “Beloved and Unbeloved”
  - Invite listeners to think of a favorite wild “critter”
    - In large groups have them turn to someone nearby and share that critter with one another; in small groups go around the room and name the animals out loud
    - Ask people to think about the ecosystem in which that critter resides
      - What benefits does that critter bring to its environment
      - What creatures are scared of this critter? Which creatures are this animal scared of?
      - What would happen to the ecosystem if this animal were no longer a part of it
  - Repeat above exercise with listeners choosing a wild “critter” they don’t like
  - Conclude
    - Whether they are loved or disliked by you, all the critters named today are beloved by God. They are all a precious part of God’s grand Creation and serve a function, whether we understand it or not.
- Animal Prayer

God our Creator and Provider, you feed the birds of the air and clothe the flowers of the field. Show us how we interfere with natural habitats and the good they provide for all Creation. Refocus our efforts to better partner with your restoring ways. Bless animal habitats and nature preserves so that they may continue to provide for all in the interwoven web of life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen**
- Song – “A Place in the Choir”

## Offering

### Offering Prayer

Sovereign of the universe,

**you set the parameters of the sea and renew the earth with light from the ages and rain from the heavens. Receive the gifts we bring as we care for oceans, lakes, and all habitats, to the glory of God in the name of Christ our peace. Amen.**

### Benediction

The God of all Creation:

of oceans and lakes,  
of prairie dogs and moose,  
of spring rains and winter squalls,  
of Pluto and Mars,

bles, keep, and strengthen you and all Creation,  
today, tomorrow, and always.

In the name of the + Triune God. **Amen**

### Dismissal

Go in peace. Care for Creation.

**Thanks be to God.**

# 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Ocean & Lake Sunday

## Job 38:1-18

After his friends have been giving him unhelpful advice about his suffering, Job finally hears from God. God comes not with answers, but rather questions Job about his place in all of Creation, giving him a new perspective.

<sup>1</sup>Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:

<sup>2</sup>"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

<sup>3</sup>Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

<sup>4</sup>"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.

<sup>5</sup>Who determined its measurements — surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it?

<sup>6</sup>On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone <sup>7</sup>when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

<sup>8</sup>"Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb? — <sup>9</sup>when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, <sup>10</sup>and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, <sup>11</sup>and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped'?"

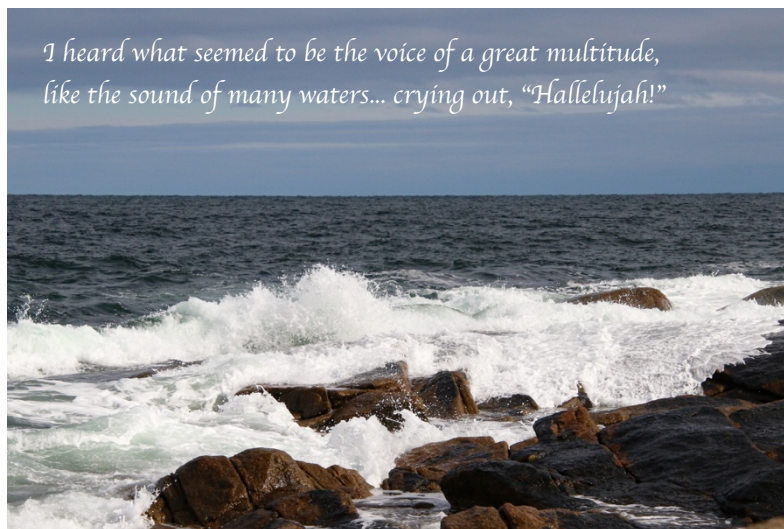
<sup>12</sup>"Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place, <sup>13</sup>so that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? <sup>14</sup>It is changed like clay under the seal, and it is dyed like a garment.

<sup>15</sup>Light is withheld from the wicked, and their uplifted arm is broken.

<sup>16</sup>"Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep?

<sup>17</sup>Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?

<sup>18</sup>Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this.



*I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters... crying out, "Hallelujah!"*

## Psalm 104:1-9, 24-26

*This Psalm of praise, like Genesis 1, is an account of Creation of the world. In today's selected verses, God delights in Creation of a sea creature, Leviathan.*

<sup>1</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul; O Lord my God, you are very great! You are clothed with majesty and splendor.

<sup>2</sup> **You wrap yourself with light as with a cloak and stretch out the heavens like a tent.**

<sup>3</sup> You lay the beams of your chambers in the waters above; you make the clouds your chariot; you ride on the wings of the wind.

<sup>4</sup> **You make the winds your messengers and flames of fire your servants.**

<sup>5</sup> You set the earth upon its foundations, so that from now until forever it shall never be moved.

<sup>6</sup> **You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains.**

<sup>7</sup> At your rebuke the waters fled, scattered by your voice of thunder.

Ocean & Lake Sunday  
Season of Creation 1  
Year C

Job 38:1-18

Psalm 104:1-9, 24-26

Revelation 16:1-9;

19:6-8

Luke 5:1-11

<sup>8</sup> **They went up into the mountains and descended down to the valleys, to the place where you assigned them.**

<sup>9</sup> You set the limits that they should not pass; never shall they return to cover the earth again.

<sup>24</sup> **How manifold are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.**

<sup>25</sup> Yonder is the Sea, great and wide, with its swarms too many to number, living things both small and great.

<sup>26</sup> **There go the ships to and fro, and Leviathan, which you made for the sport of it.**

# 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Ocean & Lake Sunday

## Revelation 16:1-9/19:6-8

*In Chapter 16, we hear the consequences of human actions affecting all of Creation. However, Chapter 19 begins with the sound of many voices singing "Hallelujah!" thus bringing hope.*

<sup>16:1</sup>Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

<sup>2</sup>So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and a foul and painful sore came on those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image.

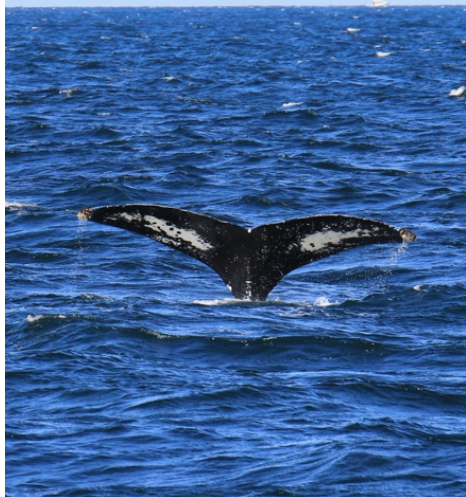
<sup>3</sup>The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing in the sea died.

<sup>4</sup>The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. <sup>5</sup>And I heard the angel of the waters say,

"You are just, O Holy One, who are and were, for you have judged these things;

<sup>6</sup>because they shed the blood of saints and prophets, you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!"

*There go the ships to and fro, and  
Leviathan which you made just for the  
sport of it.*



<sup>7</sup>And I heard the altar respond,

"Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just!"

<sup>8</sup>The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire; <sup>9</sup>they were scorched by the fierce heat, but they cursed the name of God, who had authority over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory.

<sup>19:6</sup>Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

<sup>7</sup>Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready;

<sup>8</sup>to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

## Luke 5:1-11

*Jesus reveals his power over Creation with a miraculous catch of fish. Simon, James, and John respond by leaving everything to follow Jesus.*

<sup>1</sup>Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup>he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup>He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup>When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup>Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup>When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup>So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup>But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup>For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; <sup>10</sup>and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." <sup>11</sup>When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Ocean & Lake Sunday  
Season of Creation 1  
Year C  
Job 38:1-18  
Psalm 104:1-9, 24-26  
Revelation 16:1-9;  
19:6-8  
Luke 5:1-11

*Pictures available to use for bulletin covers and  
PowerPoints in resources file at  
[www.nisynod/creation](http://www.nisynod/creation).*

# 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Ocean & Lake Sunday

## Seeds from the texts

### “Quotes” and Comments

This chapter follows several chapters’ worth of dialogue between Job and his friends about the explanation for his profound losses of health, wealth, and family. In this chapter, God finally responds and, in a sense, *puts Job in his place* – but in an expanded, cosmic way.

All of Creation through space and time are the works of God.

Job is experiencing great loss and grief. His friends have been no comfort. He believes God is unjust for allowing calamities to afflict him. God responds by taking him on a whirlwind tour of nature.

This reconnects Job with nature and shows how much God cares for him and all the Earth, but also reminding him of where he stands in the larger scope of things. Job is given a new perspective.

This is another retelling of the creation narratives as found in Genesis 1 and 2.

This passage can also be compared to Jonah’s prayer in Jonah 3. The imagery of the might of the oceans is powerful.

The psalmist anthropomorphizes water. Water stands and flees, it rises up and runs.

William Brown, Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, and author of *Deep Calls to Deep: The Psalms in Dialogue Amid Disruption* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2021), calls Psalm 104 “a poetic revelry of

praise to YHWH as creator and provider. This cosmic liturgy proceeds from the meteorological to the zoological to the anthropological, all expressed doxologically” (p. 65). He stresses that Creation was not just a one-time act in the primordial past, but is “ongoing in God’s sustained provision and care for all creatures” (p. 66).

Anthropocentrism is often from a white male perspective and does not include the perspectives of people of color.

The theme of “know your place” from the Job passage emerges again with Psalm 104. The psalmist is clear that human beings have a place, but it’s not one of centrality or domination. In this passage, for example, human ships are tiny in comparison to the enormous Leviathan that cavorts in the ocean.

“Creation is not simply habitat for humanity; it is habitat for diversity,” says Brown (p. 67).

Chaos is not derived from Leviathan but from humans. (See verse 35, which is not in today’s passage.)

We chose Revelation 16:1-9 as a way to remind the congregation that all is not well with the waters of the Earth. The verses eerily describe what we are now experiencing in our streams, rivers, lakes and oceans. Massive fish die-offs, bleached coral reefs, and waterways choked with plastic suffocate and poison all living things in the waters.

When oil spills get into the water, all life dies and the water

Ocean & Lake Sunday  
Season of Creation 1  
Year C

Job 38:1-18

Psalm 104:1-9, 24-26

Revelation 16:1-9;

19:6-8

Luke 5:1-11

appears red.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/03/14/the-gulf-war>

Red tide algae blooms turn the water a red color and is dangerous to life in and near the water.

It may be tempting for some to blame God for this calamity, since the passage indicates that these are “seven bowls of the wrath of God” (v. 1). However, we must be careful to understand what is actually happening here in the larger scope of the passage. As Walter Wink explains, “Humanity has done it to itself. When people suppressed the truth about God and worshiped created things, ‘God gave them up’ to darkened minds and folly” (*Engaging the Power: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*, Walter Wink, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). The problem is that we all suffer from the idolatry that pulls us away from God the Creator and toward our manufactured gods of wrath.

Environmental sins are often experienced individually, often with physical ailments. It can be hard for us to understand how much damage is happening to the ocean when we live so far away.

We chose Revelation 19:6-8 as a contrast to chapter 16. In this

## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Ocean & Lake Sunday

passage, the “sound of many waters” from the “great multitude” who worship God counters the suffering waters in chapter 16. That is to say, do not forget that there are multitudes of people who are trying to do the right thing when it comes to protecting the waters of the Earth.

The wedding imagery is a common theme in scripture talking about God reconciling God’s relationship to God’s people.

It is important to read both passages - the depths of despair and hope for the future.

The overabundant catch of fish can be a problematic aspect of this text in light of today’s context when we have overfished much of our waters. Jesus would never promote the wasting of all those fish. The passage later of the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 with so few fish shows us this.

Jesus can command the fish themselves. This story does not promote overfishing or wasting precious resources.

The disciples leave all the fish they catch - this is not a story of capitalism winning the day. We can hope that locals found the freshly caught fish and ate it all.

Wilson Dickinson posits that Luke’s story of convincing fishermen to leave their nets and huge catch is not about “recruiting them into the shirt-and-tie, door-to-door business of saving souls. Rather he is taking a repeated image out of the prophetic tradition (Jer 16:16-17, Amos 4:1-2) and telling them that they are going to overturn the whole imperial order” (*The Green Good News: Christ’s Path to Sustainable and Joyful Life*, T. Wilson Dickinson, Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019, 56). Dickinson sees this as a story of calling fishers to transform the food economy by being “agents of justice who will fish out and remove the elite who have oppressed the poor and broken covenant with God,” (56). Jesus wants to overturn the entire system and transform society.

We have been socialized to think that this type of social

change will hurt ordinary people, but actually the elite will be hurt. So, the elite teach us to accept the corrupt systems in order to protect themselves - not to protect the rest of us. In other words – “You, Peter, are not the problem. The problem is those who are exploiting you.”

Peter’s perception of himself as sinful didn’t come from his own actions but his role in society. The fact that Jesus even associated with fishers is notable. Like shepherds, they were at the bottom of the imperial hierarchy. It’s no wonder that Simon Peter did not think himself worthy of Jesus’s presence. Yet Jesus intentionally went to this fish co-op at the lake of Gennesaret for a reason. “In short, Jesus tells Simon, the real stench does not come from you, but from those at the top. He calls these members of the fishing cooperative to help him change it” (56).



# 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Ocean & Lake Sunday

## Fruits for Preaching

*Stories, Anecdotes and Citations*

Ocean & Lake Sunday  
Season of Creation 1  
Year C

Job 38:1-18

Psalm 104:1-9, 24-26

Revelation 16:1-9;

19:6-8

Luke 5:1-11

While traveling to Maine, I took a whale watching cruise. These creatures are enormous, and seeing them in zoos, aquariums, or on TV does not do their size justice. But standing along the railing of the cruise ship in the vast open waters of the bay, I could not help but be overwhelmed by the sheer size of these beautiful creatures as they swam alongside the ship and leapt out of the water playfully showing off their skills. It made me feel really small, and gave me a moment to reassess my place in Creation next to such a magnificent creature.

The science of evolution has demonstrated that life has emerged from water. The ancestors to all land animals were water creatures. In Ireland, just outside of Knightstown, County Kerry, there is a site on Valentia Island where you can see fossilized tetrapod imprints. These were made between 350 and 370 million years ago when life was first transitioning from water based to land based. Seeing these footprints gives us a geological perspective and an

evolutionary perspective, making us want to treasure the water we come from all the more.

A mother's body creates amniotic fluid in the womb to help the development of a fetus. This clear, slightly yellowish liquid surrounds the baby. In healthy situations, a mother's womb produces as much as 800 mL of amniotic fluid by the time the fetus is 34 weeks. This fluid protects the infant by maintaining proper pressure on the umbilical cord and regulating temperature.

Consider how the ocean's temperature needs to be maintained for the health of the environment, how rises in temperature impact weather systems and change ecosystems. Also, think about how a person diving to the ocean depths needs specialized pressure regulating gear, while fish and marine life of all sorts and sizes seem to float along with no problem.

Invite members of your congregation who have been on ocean cruises or river cruises to talk about their experiences and how staring out over the vast ocean drew them closer to God.

The power of water is immense, especially when it is an ocean or a Great Lake. The five Great Lakes are known for many shipwrecks, the Edmund Fitzgerald on Lake Superior is one such sinking that was so famous a song was written about it. When it left its port in Duluth, MN, the weather was clear. Then a storm rose up, far worse than the captain and crew had ever experienced. While another barge not far

behind was able to reach a safe harbor, the Edmund Fitzgerald was not, and the entire crew was lost with the ship. How does the power of the Great Lakes frighten us, how does it inspire awe within us.

Consider a local man-made lake here in Illinois. Why was it made? Is it for a Housing development? A country club? A campground? For recreation such as fishing and boating? Is it in a nature preserve or state park? What does it say that we now hold the power of setting the limits for water - whether through dams and earthen works or by using big machinery to sculpt the Earth, placing water where we want - much as God did with just the Word? Are we taking the reins from God? Are we doing more harm when we do so?

A number of movies have themes connected to the water. Consider Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home. In this movie, the earth comes under attack from an alien being with whom Captain Kirk and crew are unable to communicate. All efforts to understand the are thwarted. While approaching Earth, the heroes of the story contemplate why the alien is attacking the people of Earth. Finally, the character Spock replies to the character of Dr. McCoy by saying: "There are other forms of intelligence on Earth, Doctor. Only human arrogance would assume the message [of the alien] is meant for man."

Spock learns that when the sounds from the alien are played under water, the unintelligible gibberish become the beautiful songs of humpback whales, which, in the

## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Ocean & Lake Sunday

Star Trek timeline, had been hunted out of existence. So, the crew utilized time-travel to bring a pair of humpback whales into the future in order to repopulate the earth's oceans and satisfy the alien creature. And yes, because it was a Star Trek movie, our heroes were successful and two "time-traveling" humpback whales named George and Gracie saved the Earth.

Disney animated feature films "The Little Mermaid" and "Luca" have strong themes of land versus water life, and how there is great distrust between those of the sea and those of the land – particularly sea creatures toward land creatures who exploit the seas. How can these children's movies with their innocent themes be opened up to help us realize that sin blocks a more harmonious relationship

between humanity and the ocean?

According to the website TheOceanCleanup.com there are over **five trillion** pieces of plastic in the ocean. These pieces have gathered with other garbage to form five massive garbage patches floating in the oceans. These garbage patches destroy ecosystems, block sunlight essential for growing plankton and algae, and break down into small pieces, subsequently being mistaken as food by sea creatures, entering the human food chain through harvested fish. And there is more. Go to the website and learn what efforts are underway to clean up the consequence of our systemic sin called plastic.

The damaging effects caused by sound on marine life is also

reported on DeepOceanFacts.com. From damaging hearing to breaking up schools of fish and interrupting marine life navigation and mating patterns, the sound caused by the number of ocean bound vessels is having a significant impact on our fellow creatures of the sea. Do we hear these animals crying out for relief?

Ocean & Lake Sunday  
Season of Creation 1  
Year C

Job 38:1-18

Psalms 104:1-9, 24-26

Revelation 16:1-9;

19:6-8

Luke 5:1-11

### Other Ideas

- Share in a Bible study the video link titled "The Ocean Cleanup begins cleaning the Great Pacific Garbage Patch": (<https://youtu.be/tLcnJEMnIT>). The video illustrates how plastic captured from the ocean has been turned into new items. It will take 3000 trips to clean-up the entire Great Pacific Ocean Patch - an area nearly twice the size of Texas. There are ocean garbage patches in each of the oceans.
- Form a task force to evaluate and change your congregation's plastic usage. Focus on eliminating one time use plastics rather than recycling.
- Host a family movie night and watch the Disney animated feature film Luca or The Little Mermaid. Prepare a short devotion about God's love for ocean/marine-life. Use the film as an opportunity to highlight the relationship between humanity and ocean/marine-life. Take a day trip to a nearby lake to learn more about local marine-life.
- Invite your confirmation class to do a research project on marine life. Choose several ocean species. Prepare a science-fair like project where the students display pictures of the chosen species, information about their habitat, the threats they face, and the ways the species helps the environment. Consider also doing the same for species that live in local waters, like the Great Lakes and local man-made lakes. Use the opportunity to also demonstrate what happens when a species is over-fished or over-populated.
- Use the National Park Service website: Asian Carp Overview - Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (U.S. National Park Service) ([nps.gov](https://www.nps.gov)) to discuss Asian Carp and the dangers they pose to natural habitats in the Great Lakes, and what is being done to help end the spread of this invasive species.

# 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Ocean & Lake Sunday

Ocean & Lake Sunday Hymn Suggestions	Gathering	Song of Day	Offering/Communion	Sending
Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters, ELW #445	X	X		
You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore, ELW #817	X	X		
When Peace Like a River, ELW #785		X	X	
Waterlife, ELW #457		X	X	
Wade in the Water, ELW #459	X	X	X	X
Crashing Waters at Creation, ELW #455		X		
Eternal Father, Strong to Save, ELW #756		X	X	X
Calm to the Waters, ELW #794			X	
Let Justice Flow Like Streams, ELW #717		X		X
When You Send Forth Your Spirit, ACS #945	X		X	X
Come to the Water of Life, ACS #955	X	X		
In Sacred Manner, ACS #1071		X	X	
How Shall I Sing that Majesty, ACS #1095	X	X	X	
Song of the Waters, HAB1 #4		X		
Song of Healing, HAB1 #12		X		

## Prayer of the Day

Creator God, we are in awe of the majesty and mystery of the oceans and lakes. They provide a home to living things both small and great, from plankton to Leviathan. Show us our place in your great Creation so that we live with humility and respect for all that you have made, through Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. **Amen.**

## Get Up & Go

*Places in and around the NIS to visit in relation to Earth Sunday*

Take a trip to the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago. Invite the group to meet one of the specialists to talk about marine life, its beauty, and how marine life provides so much for our environment. A similar experience can be found in Dubuque, Iowa at the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium.

*I never saw a Moor -  
I never saw the Sea -  
Yet know I how the Heather looks  
And what the Billow be.*

*I never spoke with God  
Nor visited in Heaven -  
Yet certain am I of the spot  
As if the checks were given -*

**Emily Dickinson**

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Animal Sunday

### Job 39:1-8, 26-30

*God places Job's situation in perspective next to the vast diversity of animal life.*

<sup>1</sup>"Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you observe the calving of the deer?

<sup>2</sup>Can you number the months that they fulfill, and do you know the time when they give birth, <sup>3</sup>when they crouch to give birth to their offspring, and are delivered of their young?

<sup>4</sup>Their young ones become strong, they grow up in the open; they go forth, and do not return to them.

<sup>5</sup>Who has let the wild ass go free? Who has loosed the bonds of the swift ass, <sup>6</sup>to which I have given the steppe for its home, the salt land for its dwelling place?

<sup>7</sup>It scorns the tumult of the city; it does not hear the shouts of the driver. <sup>8</sup>It ranges the mountains as its pasture, and it searches after every green thing.

<sup>26</sup>"Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars, and spreads its wings toward the south?

<sup>27</sup>Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up and makes its nest on high?

<sup>28</sup>It lives on the rock and makes its home in the fastness of the rocky crag. <sup>29</sup>From there it spies the prey; its eyes see it from far away. <sup>30</sup>Its young ones suck up blood; and where the slain are, there it is."

### Psalm 104:14-23

*The Psalmist offers us poetry to celebrate God as Creator of a wonderful, mysterious, and diverse animal kingdom.*

<sup>14</sup>You make grass grow for the cattle, and plants to serve humankind; that they may bring forth food from the earth,

<sup>15</sup>**wine to gladden human hearts, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart.**

<sup>16</sup>The trees of the LORD are well supplied, the cedars of Lebanon that you planted,

<sup>17</sup>**in which the birds build their nests, while the stork makes the fir trees its dwelling.**

<sup>18</sup>The high hills belong to the mountain goats, and the stony cliffs are a refuge for the badgers.

<sup>19</sup>**You made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows the time of its setting.**

Animal Sunday  
Season of Creation 2  
Year C

Job 39:1-8, 26-30

Psalm 104:14-23

Revelation 5:1-10

Luke 12:22-31

<sup>20</sup>You bring on darkness that it may be night, in which all the beasts of the forest prowl.

<sup>21</sup>**The lions roar for their prey seeking their food from God.**

<sup>22</sup>The sun rises, and they withdraw and lay themselves down in their dens.

<sup>23</sup>**People go forth to their work and to their labor until the evening.**



*Is it by your wisdom  
that the hawk soars?*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Animal Sunday

Animal Sunday  
Season of Creation 2  
Year C  
Job 39:1-8, 26-30  
Psalm 104:14-23  
Revelation 5:1-10  
Luke 12:22-31

### Revelation 5:1-10

*John of Patmos reassures us with a vision of hope as the Lamb steps forward to receive the scroll and restore all things.*

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; <sup>2</sup>and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" <sup>3</sup>And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>4</sup>And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup>Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that

he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

<sup>6</sup>Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup>He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup>When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup>They sing a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;

<sup>10</sup>you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth."

### Luke 12:22-31

*In this passage, Jesus uses the lilies and ravens to teach us to trust the Creator.*

<sup>22</sup>[Jesus] said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. <sup>23</sup>For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. <sup>24</sup>Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! <sup>25</sup>And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>26</sup>If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? <sup>27</sup>Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>28</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you — you of little faith! <sup>29</sup>And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. <sup>30</sup>For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. <sup>31</sup>Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.



*Pictures available to use for bulletin covers and PowerPoints in resources file at [www.nisynod/creation](http://www.nisynod/creation).*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Animal Sunday

### Seeds from the texts “Quotes” and Comments

The Bible shows a complicated relationship between humans and other animals, especially from a theological and cultic perspective. The first three chapters of Genesis reflect this complexity. On the one hand, God creates the vast array of creatures on Earth, calls them “good” (*tov* in Hebrew), and gives Adam the sacred task of naming them, hoping that one would be a suitable companion to him in his loneliness. On the other hand, it appears that humans have “dominion” over all other animals and are free to use (and exploit) them for their benefit – with God’s blessing and even command. After the fiasco at the Tree of Knowledge, God notes that from that point forward, there would be enmity between humans and serpents, reflective of the rupture in the human – other-than-human relationship. God killed animals and used their skins to cover the first humans’ nakedness. And God commands the sacrifice of animals in cultic worship.

The readings for Animal Sunday continue a theme from last week: Scripture shifts our perspective so that we know our place in Creation. God designed the world so that it could sustain itself, and almost all ecosystems thrive without human intervention. In modern times, we know that they also suffer because of us.

God as naturalist! God as biologist! Job 39 not only describes the habitats, activities, feeding patterns, and

life cycles of several different kinds of animals, it makes an implicit theological claim. We see this in the way the questions are asked: Do **you** know? Do **you** observe and count? **Who** does all this? Is it by **your** wisdom? Job (as do we) can only answer, “No – it’s you, God our Creator, who knows and observes and counts and makes and whose wisdom enables all of these animals to exist.”

At the time Job was written, humans had no say in the creation, evolution, habitat, or life cycles of animals. Though they had domesticated some species and learned animal husbandry for cattle, sheep, and goats, these represented a fraction of the panoply of animals that existed. Today, however, humans have developed the ability to clone some species, genetically modify others, and even count and track some species in the wild. How does our scientific and technological ability shape our theology when we have achieved god-like abilities that Job’s author never could have imagined?

At the same time, human activity has vastly impinged on the habitats of species that live on mountains, steppes, salt land, pasture, rocky crags, and all other places where animals dwell. Species extinction is rapidly diminishing the population and diversity of animals on this planet. The fact is, if God were to have this conversation with Job today, some of these animals would not even exist.

### Animal Sunday Season of Creation 2 Year C

Job 39:1-8, 26-30  
Psalm 104:14-23  
Revelation 5:1-10  
Luke 12:22-31

Though its not in today’s readings, we may hear the voice of the scribe in Luke 10:29 asking “Who is our neighbor?” In Job, God answers: “Wild animals are!”

The wild ass in Job 39:5-7 is contrasted to the life of its domesticated cousin. Despite what our tamed animals make us think, animals don’t depend on us. They even scorn our habitations: domesticated cities.

The author of Job goes into great detail about the habitats of the deer, donkeys, and hawks. God is concerned with the ecological niches of these animals. Caring for habitats is caring for animals. This idea continues in the Psalm.

William Brown, Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, and author of *Deep Calls to Deep: The Psalms in Dialogue Amid Disruption* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2021), notes that this part of the psalm makes it a point to name not just the innumerable species but also their habitats and niches, “from towering trees and flowing wadies to mountainous crags and the deep dark sea” (67). Further, he says that in God’s “cosmic mansion there are many dwelling places, each ‘fit’ for

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Animal Sunday

each species” (ibid). In other words, if we want to preserve the animals, we must preserve their habitat.

Brown also notes: “Humanity in Psalm 104 is merely one species among many, all coexisting together, each with its niche in creation and its rhythm for flourishing. Absent, however, is the language of dominance over creation; no animal is placed ‘under’ humanity’s ‘feet’ in Psalm 104,” (69). Again, this reiterates a theme from last week of humans understanding their “place” in God’s Creation.

Human beings are not the apex. We are one of many. Nothing in this Psalm indicates that these species are here for our enjoyment; rather, their existence reveals the majesty of God.

This Psalm connects well to 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul talks about one body having many diverse members. All creation is connected. Some are keystone species, vital to the life of their ecosystems. Humans, it turns out, are almost never vital members of nature’s ecosystems.

Eco-grief is real. Despite not being a Psalm of lament, it may easily become one in today’s world. We mourn the loss of species, diversity, and habitats as a result of human action.

Imagery showcases the cycle of the day, both the light of day and dark of night. Darkness is

so often made into a negative thing, but in this Psalm the animals in depend on it to live! This is an important distinction especially for an anti-racist reading of scripture. Darkness contains beauty, necessity, and glory.

Today’s epistle continues with the book of Revelation. Chapter five contrasts two animals with strong symbolism both in the Hebrew and Christian

the lion and the lamb; predator vs. prey; strong and fierce vs. weak and vulnerable. Barbara Rossing cautions against those who misinterpret the message of

Revelation to support a “Rapture” theology of glory and violence. “In place of Jesus’ blessing of peacemakers, the Rapture voyeuristically glorifies violence and war. In place of Revelation’s vision of the Lamb’s vulnerable and self-giving love, the Rapture celebrates the lion-like wrath of the Lamb. This theology is not biblical,” she says (*The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*, Barbara Rossing, New York: Basic Books, 2004, 1-2).

There is a strong correlation between the sacrificial lamb of Exodus whose blood staves off the angel of death, and the “blood of the Lamb” in Christian liturgical theology which is the centerpiece (along with the bread) of Holy Communion. Rossing explains that the vulnerability of Jesus’ incarnation at Bethlehem can counter the “violent, avenging story the Christian Zionists love to tell. Rather than rallying the troops in Jerusalem in anticipation of the lion-like Jesus’ end-times return to fight the mother of all battles, rather than craving the violence . . . you meet the Lamb Jesus whose birth you can comprehend only by stooping low to the ground, in humility and wonder” (77).

Rossing points out that there are two words in chapter 5 – “lion” and “conquer” (*nike* in Greek) – which lead readers to expect a fierce creature will be the one to rip open the scroll. Lions were sometimes used in gladiator spectacles. Also, apocalyptic literature sometimes uses the appearance of a lion to advance the plot, such as in Second Esdras, where “the Messiah is portrayed as a

### Animal Sunday Season of Creation 2 Year C

Job 39:1-8, 26-30  
Psalm 104:14-23  
Revelation 5:1-10  
Luke 12:22-31



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Animal Sunday

roaring lion prophesying judgment against the Roman eagle and its violence,” (110). So when we see a *lamb* appear instead, it’s a total surprise and a complete reversal of expectations. “No other apocalypse ever pictures the divine in this image. The depiction of Jesus as a Lamb shows him in the most vulnerable way possible, as a victim who is slaughtered but standing – that is, crucified but risen to life” (111).

Our symbolic use of animals can often be one-dimensional. The lion and the lamb are metaphors, but how similar are they to their real-life counterparts?

The gospel also describes animals in their natural habitats. They are content where God created them to be. What prevents humanity from thriving like the ravens and lilies? In God’s plan for Creation, where might our habitat be?

Jesus continues to tear us away from our dependency on the economy. By not worrying about our possessions & riches, we can put our treasure in heaven. Notice how Jesus’ teaching about possessions is connected to the parable of the

ravens and lilies, as well as the parable of the wealthy man which precedes today’s gospel.

From *For the Beauty of the Earth* (Leah D. Schade, St Louis: Chalice, 2019): “Jesus is showing us that Nature has important things to teach us about God. We might say that the flowers and birds are our Sunday School teachers! How do you treat your Sunday School teachers? Do you go into their homes and poison their water? Do you tear down their dwelling places and force them to become homeless wanderers? Do you throw trash into their living spaces? Do you drill a hole in their yard and set up air-polluting, water polluting industries? Of course not!” (45)

Continuing: “But the birds of the air are finding plastic bottles and trash littering their feeding grounds. The lilies of the field are finding industrial waste seeping into their soil. Jesus’ teachings about nature are not just metaphors for how the Kingdom of God will manifest itself. These parables have important significance for *this*

particular time of ecological holocaust. They teach us that the very illustrations that Jesus uses – the basic, natural and life-giving processes of healthy ecosystem – those very processes are under threat of annihilation,” (45).

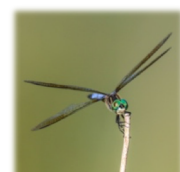
In Matthew’s version, the species of bird isn’t specified. Here, they are ravens, commonly viewed as scavengers.

How do we handle the anthropocentrism here, putting people above the ravens and lilies?

This parable connects to Sabbath laws in Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15, which point to the Sabbath as providing rest to farmers, **animals**, workers, servants, and all who toil.

This can also be connected to the Leviticus 19:9, which commands farmers to leave the corners of their fields unharvested, so that the poor may find food there. Such corners add very little to the purses of farmers, but they can become habitat for wildlife, food for hungry, a place of life for all.

**Animal Sunday**  
**Season of Creation 2**  
*Year C*  
**Job 39:1-8, 26-30**  
**Psalm 104:14-23**  
**Revelation 5:1-10**  
**Luke 12:22-31**



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Animal Sunday

BBC produced a fascinating series called *Fierce Queens* which looks at various animal species through the eyes of females. They are seven to eight minute episodes and are fascinating. They can be seen on the Roku Channel -

<https://therokuchannel.roku.com/details/5227b2b8d13c587d8efe9c6f2719a127/fierce-queens>

Animals live in such balance when in various ecosystems. When that balance is upset, the entire ecosystem is thrown out of whack. There are some fascinating stories about reintroduction of “keystone” species that have disappeared from ecosystems. When reintroduced ecosystems are regenerated and resurrected. Some examples include the wolves of Yellowstone (a great video available through PBS - <https://illinois.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/a58e3ca2-52ab-45f5-87ac-26ee0d681146/wolves-of-yellowstone-earth-a-new-wild/>) and the prairie dog in the grasslands of Chihuahua, Mexico (this story and a manuscript/audio are available through the NPR show “Living on Earth” -

<https://www.loe.org/shows/segments.html?programID=13-P13-00004&segmentID=8>).

A keystone species being introduced here in Northern Illinois Synod is the American Buffalo at Nachusa Grasslands. This Nature Conservancy preserve has been working for decades to restore natural Illinois prairie. But because of the absence of grazers in the ecosystem, the spread of grasses could not be controlled and the diversity of plant and animal species were not able to

be maintained without human intervention. The buffalo grazes on grass and leaves the forbs (flowers) allowing the full diversity of the ecosystem to come forth. The buffalo also provide habitat for birds, beetles, and even turtles.

The story of the Asian beetle is another example of the upsetting of nature’s balance. In the farmlands of Illinois, the beloved ladybug used to be plentiful. But, due to the eradication of the aphid (a very small bug that feeds on corn and soybeans) through insecticides and pest resistant crops, the ladybug virtually disappeared. Over time, the aphid developed resistance to the pesticides and plant strains and resurged in population. But there were no ladybugs to eat them. In an attempt to control the aphid naturally, Asian beetles were introduced – a bug that looks very much like a pale orange version of a ladybug. It did effectively control the aphid population. The Asian beetle, however, was more of a pest to humans though, as it pinches/bites and when killed releases a foul odor.

Furthermore, the birds that once fed on the ladybugs have no interest in the Asian beetle because the same chemical that releases the odor also makes them foul tasting and the birds don’t like them. Large swarms of the Asian beetle are now found each year in the late summer/early fall seeking the warmth and shelter of houses, porches, garages, etc.

Consider a community project to make bat houses. Partner with a local scout troop or scout

### Fruits for Preaching

*Stories, Anecdotes and Citations*

Animal Sunday  
Season of Creation 2  
Year C

Job 39:1-8, 26-30

Psalms 104:14-23

Revelation 5:1-10

Luke 12:22-31

working on an Eagle project to make this happen. Preparing bat houses and mounting them properly in neighborhoods will provide a good home for our neighbor the bat, and also reduce the need for pesticides and the bats will eat the mosquitos and other insects

St. Francis Day is October 4<sup>th</sup>, often celebrated on first Sunday of October. Use this as a day to highlight animals who live in the neighborhood and need local care and support. Bring in a local wildlife officer to talk about how to help injured wildlife (i.e. how are birds safely removed from the sanctuaries?) Use the resources of the DNR to discuss how to provide safely for our neighbors the skunks, raccoons, and other small mammals while protecting our home spaces.

The Disney Animated Film “The Lion King” features the song “The Circle of Life”. As a cute pop-culture song, the point it drives home is our reliance on the necrosphere. The necrosphere is the place within an environment where things that have died become the food for the earth and the next generation of animal life.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Animal Sunday

When natural material from an animal or plant dies, it feeds the earth. Consider a tree stump: as it decomposes it feeds the soil and all the creatures in and around it. Trees are good neighbors to animals even after their life is complete!

Along with the consideration of the necrosphere, consider the call for not raking our yards in the fall. What happens when we leave the fallen branches and leaves on the ground, what animals use these for shelter and food?

Brian Doyle was a prolific author who wrote on ecological themes.

In particular, *A Book of Uncommon Prayer* (Sorin Books, Notre Dame, IN) contains poetry celebrating the natural world around us. Use one or more of these poems as an opening or closing to a sermon, as a prayer lifting our concern for the environment to God.

Consider the ravens,  
they neither sow nor reap...  
yet God still feeds them.



### Animal Sunday Hymn Suggestions

	Gathering	Song of Day	Offering/Communion	Sending
God of the Sparrow, ELW #740	X	X		X
On Eagle's Wings, ELW #787	X	X		
This is my Father's World, ELW #824	X	X	X	X
All Creatures, Worship God Most High, ELW #835	X	X	X	X
When You Send Forth Your Spirit, ACS #945		X	X	
Earth is Full of Wit and Wisdom, ACS #1064	X	X		X
Do you Feel the Seasons Turning, ACS #1065	X	X		X
When at Last the Rain Falls, ACS #1066	X	X		X
The Earth Adorned in Verdant Robe, ACS #1068	X	X		X
In Sacred Manner, ACS #1071		X	X	
Hallelujah! Sing Praise to your Creator, ACS #1091	X	X		X
His Eye is on the Sparrow, TFF #252	X	X		X
All Things Bright and Beautiful, WOV #767	X	X		X
The Friendly Beasts (public domain)		X		
A Place in the Choir, SFNC #2	X	X	X	X
The Butterfly Song, SFNC #9	X	X		X
Earth and All Kin*	X	X	X	X

\* "Earth and All Kin" - <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/ecopreacher/2017/09/hymn-earth-and-all-kin/> (Permission granted by author to print the words in bulletin or for projection as long as it is being used for worship or another function of the Season of Creation. Must include proper attribution.)

### Prayer of the Day

God our Creator and Provider, you feed the birds of the air and clothe the flowers of the field. Show us how we interfere with natural habitats and the good they provide for all Creation. Refocus our efforts to better partner with your restoring ways. Bless animal habitats and nature preserves so that they may continue to provide for all in the interwoven web of life, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

### Ideas worth trying...

- Host an animal blessing
- Identify evidence of wild animals on church property (use *Bringing Nature Home* by Douglas Tallamy)
- Memorialize extinct species on All Saints Sunday
- Give thanks for animals returning from the list of threatened and endangered species (i.e. Whooping Crane & Bald Eagle)
- Make bat houses for home and church

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Animal Sunday

### Study and Discussion:

- Invite an animal lobbyist such as Melissa Smith - Policy and Government Relations Director at Great Lakes Wildlife Alliance <https://greatlakeswildlifealliance.org/> and Executive Director at Friends of the Wisconsin Wolf and Wildlife <https://wiwolvesandwildlife.org/> - to conduct an adult forum.
- Do a book study on *The Inner Life of Animals: Love, Grief, and Compassion; Surprising Observations of a Hidden World* by Peter Wohlleben.
- Challenge members of a Bible study group to each learn about a creature from your area that has recently gone extinct (in the last 200 years) and write a prayer of memory for that animal. Have each member share what they learned and conclude with a memorial service for these creatures using the prayers participants wrote.
- Visit Nachusa Grasslands, a Nature Conservancy property north of Franklin Grove, IL. Learn about the American Buffalo which they are reintroducing to the Illinois prairie and the painted box turtle which they are working to protect.
- Watch and have a discussion about the wolves of Yellowstone - <https://illinois.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/a58e3ca2-52ab-45f5-87ac-26ee0d681146/wolves-of-yellowstone-earth-a-new-wild/> - and/or listen to and discuss the story about the prairie dogs in Chihuahua, Mexico - <https://www.loe.org/shows/segments.html?programID=13-P13-00004&segmentID=8>.
- Invite community farmers to offer reflections on biblical farming requirements, such as not plowing to the edge of a field to leave some crops for animals and the poor alike (Leviticus 23:2). How do the farmers balance their need for the highest yield of crop with the need to provide for healthy habitats shared with nature all around us?

### **Children's Literature**

*All God's Critters* by Bill Staines

*The Big Book of Animal Devotions: Daily Readings About God's Amazing Creation* by William L. Coleman

*City Dog, Country Frog* by Mo Willems

*Don't Let Them Disappear* by Chelsea Clinton

*God Made the Animals* by Hannah C. Hall

*God's Big Book of Animals* by Orit Kashtan

*If You Take Away the Otter* by Susannah Buhrman-Deever

*Let's Save The Animals* by Frances Barry

*Man Gave Names to All the Animals* by Bob Dylan

*Our Animal Neighbors: Compassion for Every Furry, Slimy, Prickly Creature on Earth* by Jason Gruhl

*St. Francis and the Animals* by Alice Joyce Davidson

*Secret of the Black Rock* by Joe Todd-Stanton

### **Ideas for Children's Sermons**

- Invite children to bring in their favorite stuffed animals. Talk about each animal, how it is important to the world and loved by God.
- Talk about the various bird species in your area. Invite the children to join you outside after worship to put up birdfeeders around the church property.
- Learn and sing the song "Friendly Beasts"
- Invite the children to bring in their pets for a pet blessing.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Storm & Weather Sunday

### Job 28:20-27

Observing the power of storms, Job tells us that wisdom is hidden from us, but to God, all is known.

- <sup>20</sup>"Where then does wisdom come from?  
And where is the place of understanding?  
<sup>21</sup>It is hidden from the eyes of all living,  
and concealed from the birds of the air.  
<sup>22</sup>Abaddon and Death say, 'We have heard a rumor of it with our ears.'  
<sup>23</sup>God understands the way to it,  
and he knows its place.  
<sup>24</sup>For he looks to the ends of the earth,  
and sees everything under the heavens.  
<sup>25</sup>When he gave to the wind its weight,  
and apportioned out the waters by measure;  
<sup>26</sup>when he made a decree for the rain,  
and a way for the thunderbolt;  
<sup>27</sup>then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out.

### Psalm 29

The Psalmist offers images of weather and storms to declare the glory of God.

- <sup>1</sup> Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.  
<sup>2</sup> **Ascribe to the Lord the glory due God's name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.**  
<sup>3</sup> The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon the mighty waters.  
<sup>4</sup> **The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; the voice of the Lord is a voice of splendor.**  
<sup>5</sup> The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;  
<sup>6</sup> **the Lord makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.**  
<sup>7</sup> The voice of the Lord bursts forth in lightning flashes.  
<sup>8</sup> **The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**

The voice of the Lord makes  
the oak trees writhe...



- <sup>9</sup> The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare. And in the temple of the Lord all are crying, "Glory!"  
<sup>10</sup> **The Lord sits enthroned above the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forevermore.**  
<sup>11</sup> O Lord, give strength to your people; give them, O Lord, the blessings of peace.

### Revelation 4:1-8

Between the storm and the sea of glass, John beholds the sovereignty of God.

- <sup>1</sup>After this I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." <sup>2</sup>At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne! <sup>3</sup>And the one seated there looks like

Storm & Weather Sunday  
Season of Creation 3  
Year C

Job 28:20-27

Psalm 29

Revelation 4:1-8

Luke 8:22-25

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Storm & Weather Sunday

jasper and carnelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. <sup>4</sup>Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. <sup>5</sup>Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God; <sup>6</sup>and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal.

Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: <sup>7</sup>the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. <sup>8</sup>And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing,

"Holy, holy, holy,  
the Lord God the Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come."

### Luke 8:22-25

*In the midst of tempestuous waves and powerful winds, Jesus is the one who calms the storm.*

<sup>22</sup>One day he got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side of the lake." So they put out, <sup>23</sup>and while they were sailing he fell asleep. A windstorm swept down on the lake, and the boat was filling with water, and they were in danger. <sup>24</sup>They went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we are perishing!" And he woke up and rebuked the wind and the raging waves; they ceased, and there was a calm. <sup>25</sup>He said to them, "Where is your faith?" They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?"



### Seeds from the texts

#### "Quotes" and Comments

What's interesting is that this passage from Job is implicitly naming Canaanite gods – Baal, the powerful storm god of fertility, and Mot, the god of death and sterility. By making "wisdom" something that is apart from both of these gods – and known only to YHWH who alone can freely access it -- the writer of Job is effectively showing that Baal and Mot are no match for YHWH. At most, Abaddon (the pit) and Death have only heard rumors of wisdom; they have no access to it or control over it.

Thus, if the individual and the community want wisdom, the only way to obtain it is through worshipping the God of Creation. By extension, then,

our worship of God and its resulting wisdom should guide us in the ways of protecting and preserving Creation – not serving the middleman-gods of fertility and death who only seek our labor and devotion for their own self-perpetuation.

In her essay on this passage (*The Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011.) Monica Melanchthon points out that God specifically finds wisdom in four aspects of Creation – giving the wind its weight (as if wind has weight?!?), apportioning out the waters by measure (as if God measures *all* the water on earth?!?), making a decree for the rain (as if God commands when the rain comes?!?), and prescribing a way for the thunderbolt (as if God makes a

### Storm & Weather Sunday Season of Creation 3 Year C

Job 28:20-27

Psalm 29

Revelation 4:1-8

Luke 8:22-25

jagged path in the sky?!?). "What is stunning is that God finds this wisdom in the Earth and in the cosmos," Melanchthon says (p. 206). This has implications for the way we are to conduct ourselves in relationship to Creation. "Any violation of Earth is therefore tantamount to insulting God's holiness," she explains. Further, Melanchthon states, "We are invited to celebrate this wisdom along with God and to

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Storm & Weather Sunday

### Storm & Weather Sunday Season of Creation 3

Year C

Job 28:20-27

Psalm 29

Revelation 4:1-8

Luke 8:22-25

conduct ourselves as those who have been given stewardship, a custodianship that is characterized by justice and care . . . The wisdom that is inherent in the storms might escape us; nevertheless, it is hallowed and cherished by God, who has created the storm for the recovery and revitalization of Earth” (207).

William Brown, Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, and author of *Deep Calls to Deep: The Psalms in Dialogue Amid Disruption* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2021), characterizes Psalm 29 as a “wilderness” psalm, in that the wilderness provides the setting for God’s unrivaled power. There is both a destructive and life-giving aspect to God’s earth-shaking voice. It can break trees in half, but also cause entire countries to skip and dance like frolicking calves, not to mention inducing birth pangs in animals. As with the aforementioned passage in Job, Psalm 29 is intended to show that there is *one God* whose power and command is sovereign over both life and death – not competing gods to

whom they must pay their allegiance and their tribute.

Brown says, “The wilderness here is the arena of YHWH’s wild and reckless glory, a place for YHWH to show off, both destructively and constructively, all to be observed from the temple (29:9b)” (162). Notably, God is not enthroned in the temple in this psalm. Instead, God is enthroned upon the floodwaters, which connote chaos. This is not to say that God intends to *cause chaos*. Rather, it is to help the Israelites to properly align their thinking about who and what they should worship – the one who reigns even over the flood.

Ronald J. Allen suggests that “a preacher might imagine Revelation 4 as a wide-angle view of the throne room [of heaven],” (*I Will Tell You the Mystery: A Commentary for Preaching from the Book of Revelation*, Cascade, 2019, 48). Just as the gods of Israel’s oppressors were revealed to be mere idols in Job 28, so John reveals Rome’s Caesar to be completely missing from the throne of heaven. This is because God is the absolute ruler of heaven and earth – not any human who believes himself to be a god.

Allen reminds us that Revelation has a very specific purpose as an apocalyptic book – to expose the empire and teach people how to respond. At the same time, it

assures those who are suffering under the heavy hand of the Romans that God will ultimately destroy the empire and usher in the new Jerusalem. Similarly, contemporary congregations can draw hope from Revelation that those forces which subjugate Earth and its peoples will not last. God is still sovereign and the New Jerusalem can inspire the Beloved Community even today.

The storm in this Revelation pericope is not one of destruction, but rather a celebration of God’s reign. The bejeweled heavenly rainbow-throne dazzles John with a kaleidoscope of images. The storm is in full service of the divine; it does not pose a threat to John or the faithful. This is further evidenced by the “sea of glass” – completely calm even in the midst of the lightning and thunder.

Building on the theological claims made by the previous three readings, Luke’s story of Jesus stilling the storm demonstrates his divinity by way of his power executed over the very forces of nature. He is as untroubled by the storm as God is in the passages from Job 28, Psalm 29, and Revelation 4. With only his words he restores the waters to calmness – a “sea of glass” if we borrow Revelation’s imagery.

It can be tempting to “domesticate” this story and make it about Jesus “calming

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Storm & Weather Sunday

the storms of our lives.” But I would challenge preachers to forego this well-trod path for a more radical and revolutionary reading. If we follow through on Wilson Dickinson’s assertion that the fishers leaving their boats was a first step in building a coalition meant to overturn empire, their return to the lake and facing a storm takes on a different significance. We might say that their work of coalition-building and resisting empire will bring the demonic forces sweeping down on them like a sudden storm. Their boats will take on water. They may drown

in the deluge. But these forces are no match for the One who commands the sea and storm. They can trust in Jesus’ presence, no matter what demonic storms the empire might throw at them.

Monica Melanchthon asks an interesting question about the story of Jesus calming the storm: “Was Jesus scolding the waters? Or was he rebuking the evil spirits that were stirring the waters, spirits that were commonly believed to reside in the waters?” (*The Season of Creation: A Preaching*

*Commentary*, 211). Given that today’s storms are, in a sense, stirred up by the “evil spirits” of greenhouse gases produced by western capitalism, what would it look like to “scold” those spirits in the storm today? As ordinary citizens rise up in climate protests, chain themselves to pipelines, block boats carrying coal, and engage in other forms of nonviolent civil disobedience against fossil fuel infrastructure and systems, might this be one way that Jesus’s rebuke of the evil spirits finds expression today?

### Storm & Weather Sunday Season of Creation 3 Year C

Job 28:20-27

Psalms 29

Revelation 4:1-8

Luke 8:22-25

Be aware of the trauma that people have experienced during severe weather.

Think of a personal story of a storm that you experienced. Storms can be a moment of close connection with loved ones whether we are outside watching the storm or inside seeking shelter together.

For example, consider a father on a porch swing under the safety of the veranda huddled under a blanket with his four children singing songs to calm them as a storm brewed off in the distance.

When I was a counselor at camp (at LOMC), it was the tradition during 4<sup>th</sup> of July week

to put all the campers on a bus and take them to a nearby town for fireworks. One year, a summer thunderstorm came up while we were waiting for the fireworks to begin. We had to rush the kids back to camp and they did not get to see the fireworks. When we returned, my group had to quickly set up our tents as we had not done that yet for the day. We set them up facing north which is where the storm was headed. We all sat in our tents and watched a natural fireworks display, oohing and ahing at the thunder and lightning as the storm receded to the north.

Consider reading or telling the story of “The Parable of the Little Purple Flower” (See Google Drive Folder for text).

New life can come out of death and destruction, like a phoenix or fireweed. Some prairie grass seeds don’t begin to grow until after they have been through the fire.

### Fruits for Preaching Stories, Anecdotes and Citations

A Poem that you can use:

May you grow still enough to  
hear the small noises earth  
makes in preparing for the long  
sleep of winter, so that you  
yourself may grow calm and  
grounded deep within.

May you grow still enough to  
hear the trickling of water  
seeping into the ground, so  
that your soul may be softened  
and healed, and guided in its  
flow.

May you grow still enough to  
hear the splintering of  
starlight in the winter sky and  
the roar at earth’s fiery core.

May you grow still enough to  
hear the stir of a single  
snowflake in the air, so that  
your inner silence may turn into  
hushed expectation.

~ Brother David Steindl-Rast

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Storm & Weather Sunday

Storms can bring out the best (and worst) in people.

Lightning combines oxygen and nitrogen to create nitrates that enrich the soil.

<https://wisconsin.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/nves.sci.earth.nitrate/lightning-produces-nitrates/>

Abaddon - the pit - is like the necrosphere - the sphere of death and dirt. See *The Nature of Nature* by Enric Sala (National Geographic, 2020) for more information.

Idolatry is an industry - like the *Left Behind* novel series by Tim LaHaye

White Christian Nationalism is another idolatrous industry.

Not all storms need to be seen as dangerous and destructive. Watching lightning and thunder from a distance is so peaceful. Going outside as a storm is brewing before seeking shelter is quite a midwestern thing to do!

Qol Yahweh - "voice of the Lord" in Hebrew sounds like thunder. Try reading Psalm 29 in Hebrew to feel how God is the voice of thunder over the waters.

A Hebrew reading of Psalm 29: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afFkCbxtuwc>

A chanting of Psalm 29 in Hebrew:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M\\_0m9\\_ZgMqQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_0m9_ZgMqQ)

A Jewish song of Psalm 29 in Hebrew:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILDe-7Gvqhk>

Is God in the storm today? Through global warming and climate change, we have created many of the storms that afflict us.

These storms fit into the big picture of God's work in the world, even if we can't see or understand it.

Some say that storms are God's punishment for various sinful human actions, but this isn't healthy or accurate. The people who claim these things don't want to feel obligated to help those impacted by natural disasters.

In 2009, as the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted on the Sexuality Study, a storm came through town. A tornado damaged the steeple of an ELCA congregation. People opposed to the sexuality study said that was God punishing the ELCA for its decision.

God does not use storms to punish people. Because of the great flood of Noah's Ark, God

Storm & Weather Sunday  
Season of Creation 3  
Year C

Job 28:20-27

Psalm 29

Revelation 4:1-8

Luke 8:22-25

promised not to use storms to punish.

Check out Catherine Keller's essay entitled "Talk About the Weather: The Greening of Eschatology." (Adams, C. J., 1993. *Ecofeminism and the sacred*. Continuum.)

Weather has brought us together as a common experience, but it is no longer safe to talk about it as a beginning of conversation because of climate change.

Climate change is still a common experience - we all experience its unpredictability

Pneuma (πνευμα) - the spirit blows where it wills, and so does weather. The Spirit is in the weather.

Jesus is in the boat protecting us from literal and figurative storms.

### Adult Forum Ideas

- Review or Create a Disaster Response Plan. Download Lutheran Disaster Response's Congregational Disaster Preparedness Guide as a starting place: <https://elca.org/Resources/Lutheran-Disaster-Response>
  - [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) has many great resources, too.
  - Also, see Church Mutual's website: <https://www.churchmutual.com/98/Safety-Resources>
  - Do a study about **Lutheran Disaster Response** and/or include their inserts in your bulletin.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Storm & Weather Sunday

### Storm & Weather Sunday Hymn Suggestions

	Gathering	Song of Day	Offering/Communion	Sending
God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind, ELW #400		X		
Morning Has Broken, ELW #556	X			
Here I am Lord, ELW #574	X	X		X
Jesus Savior Pilot Me, ELW #755		X		X
Eternal Father Strong to Save, ELW #756		X		X
Precious Lord, Take My Hand, ELW #773		X		X
Calm to the Waves, ELW #794		X	X	
Have you Thanked the Lord, ELW #829	X	X		
Now the Heavens Start to Whisper, ACS #901	X		X	
As the Wind Song, ACS #943		X		
Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud, ACS #947		X		X
The Word Who Sang the Light into Creation, ACS #973		X	X	
Can you Feel the Seasons Turning, ACS #1065		X		X
When at Last the Rain Falls, ACS #1066	X	X		
In Sacred Manner, ACS #1071		X	X	
Hallelujah! Sing Praise to your Creator, ACS #1091	X	X		X
Song of the Earth, HAB1 #3		X		
Song of the Waters, HAB1 #4		X		
Song of Sophia, HAB1 #5		X		
God's Sacred Secret Garden, HAB1 #8		X		
Today in New Creation Day, HAB1 #13		X		

### Prayer of the Day

Lord of tempest and calm, your voice thunders throughout all Creation. The power of storms both frighten and fascinate. Give us faith to trust you in challenging moments to find comfort and peace, through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### Get Up & Go

*Places in and around the NIS to visit in relation to Storm & Weather Sunday*

- Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago Academy of Science "Weather to Climate" <https://naturemuseum.org/>
- Discovery Center Museum Rockford "Wild Weather" <http://www.discoverycentermuseum.org/visit/visit-overview>
- Museum of Science and Industry Chicago "Science Storms" <https://www.msichicago.org/>

### Try this...

...Create Storm/Preparedness kits to donate or keep - for cars or homes: <https://www.ready.gov/kit>

Another kit idea:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWaxWrijALX0>

### Children's Message Ideas

- This provides a chance for a "Mr. Rogers moment" when talking about what to do after a storm destroys homes or hurts people. Where do we find God in the wreckage? Look for the helpers! God is working through them to bring comfort, food, clothes, shelter, and to help rebuild lives.
- *Rufus And the Scary Storm* by Lucy Bell (Sparkhouse, 2018) - Talk about how animals and young children respond to storms. How can we care for others who are more afraid of bad weather?
- *The Storm That Stopped: A true story about who Jesus really is* by Alison Mitchell (Good Book Company, 2016)
- Have a local firefighter, EMS, or Red Cross volunteer come talk to kids about fire safety. Have the kids donate items (stuffed animals or items they request) to the local fire department.
- Show a bug out bag and what might be kept in it. Where is the line between basic safety precautions and overdoing it (for example, having a bug out bag vs. being prepared)?
- Explore [ready.gov's](https://www.ready.gov/kids) kid's page for more ideas: <https://www.ready.gov/kids>
- Talk about snowflakes and how unique they are.
- Have kids build a weather station at church or put out a rain gauge. ("Build your own Weather Station" <https://www.msichicago.org/science-at-home/hands-on-science/weather-station/>)

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Cosmos

### Proverbs 8:22-31

*Woman Wisdom, God's first creation, details great love for all that God has made. She was present as God created the Cosmos.*

<sup>22</sup>The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.  
<sup>23</sup>Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.  
<sup>24</sup>When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.  
<sup>25</sup>Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth —  
<sup>26</sup>when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world's first bits of soil.  
<sup>27</sup>When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,  
<sup>28</sup>when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep,  
<sup>29</sup>when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, <sup>30</sup>then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, <sup>31</sup>rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

### Psalm 148

*The psalmist calls on all Creation, including the sun, moon, and stars, to praise the Lord.*

<sup>1</sup> Hallelujah! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise God in the heights.  
<sup>2</sup> **Praise the Lord, all you angels; sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.**  
<sup>3</sup> Praise the Lord, sun and moon; sing praise, all you shining stars.  
<sup>4</sup> **Praise the Lord, heaven of heavens, and you waters above the heavens.**  
<sup>5</sup> Let them praise the name of the Lord, who commanded, and they were created,

<sup>6</sup> **who made them stand fast forever and ever, giving them a law that shall not pass away.**  
<sup>7</sup> Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps;  
<sup>8</sup> **fire and hail, snow and fog, tempestuous wind, doing God's will;**  
<sup>9</sup> mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars;  
<sup>10</sup> **wild beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds;**  
<sup>11</sup> sovereigns of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the world;  
<sup>12</sup> **young men and maidens, old and young together.**  
<sup>13</sup> Let them praise the name of the Lord, whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.  
<sup>14</sup> **The Lord has raised up strength for the people and praise for all faithful servants, the children of Israel, a people who are near the Lord. Hallelujah!**

Cosmos Sunday  
Season of Creation 4  
Year C  
Proverbs 8:22-31  
Psalm 148  
Colossians 1:15-20  
Luke 24:44-53

*Sing praise, all you  
shining stars...*

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Cosmos

### Colossians 1:15-20

*The letter to the Colossians tells us that all Creation is held together in Jesus Christ through whom all things were created.*

<sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; <sup>16</sup>for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers — all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

### Luke 24:44-53

*At the conclusion of Luke's Gospel, Jesus ascends into the Cosmos. As he leaves his disciples, he opens their minds to understand his mission and theirs.*

<sup>44</sup>Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you — that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

<sup>50</sup>Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. <sup>51</sup>While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup>And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; <sup>53</sup>and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

**Cosmos Sunday  
Season of Creation 4  
Year C**

**Proverbs 8:22-31**

**Psalm 148**

**Colossians 1:15-20**

**Luke 24:44-53**

*While Jesus was blessing them, he...was carried up into heaven.*



## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Cosmos

In addition to seeing Wisdom as a master worker, consider also Wisdom personified as a little girl. The book *When God Was a Little Girl* by David R. Weiss. (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2015) may stir the preacher's imagination and/or be a resource for a children's message.

Take note of how the divine feminine works her way into patriarchal scriptures.

Wisdom and God are partners.

The Church can enter the public square and invite people to Wisdom's feast.

Wisdom's home is in Creation/the Earth/Nature/the Cosmos and this has eco-ethical implications for our lives today.

Scripture often presents two competing stories one of which we must choose. Today we are offered Wisdom's feast.

In Proverbs 8:27-28 Wisdom *established the heavens*. The Wisdom of God is in the DNA of the Cosmos. This reality connects us and all Creation to the deep history of time.

In today's psalm, the Cosmos itself gives praise to the Lord.

William Brown, author of *Deep Calls to Deep: The Psalms in Dialogue Amid Disruption* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2021), contrasts Psalm 8 and Psalm 104 and shows how Psalm 148 resolves the tension between the human hierarchy of Psalm 8 and its absence in Psalm 104. Humanity's job in Creation can be seen in this psalm as being the choir director for Creation. Humanity

is not dominant over Creation, but has a role to play. Humanity is responsible for enabling Creation to praise God. "Nothing in creation is considered inanimate, and thus nothing lacks the ability to praise God. Everything both living and nonliving, waits to be called upon to render praise," (Brown, 73).

In moral and ethical deliberations this psalm requires that we ask: *Does this hinder or enable this entity to praise God?*

In light of the previous week's readings from Job, the preacher may also want to look at Job 38:31ff for ways this poem connects to Cosmos Sunday.

The letter to the Colossians invites our collective wonder at what holds the universe together. Even scientists recognize that something beyond the realm of knowledge is holding it all together.

Empire is in the background of this letter and so claiming Christ Jesus as Lord boldly and implicitly says that Caesar is not. This is an invitation to explore idolatries in our present socio-political context. The preacher is encouraged to keep in mind that most people want to hear about social issues in the context of scripture, theology, and our call to discipleship.

Who today tries to claim thrones, dominion, and irrefutability?

In addressing the "thrones or dominions or rulers or powers" of the present age, the preacher is to be encouraged that people

### Seeds from the texts "Quotes" and Comments

Cosmos Sunday  
Season of Creation 4  
Year C

Proverbs 8:22-31

Psalm 148

Colossians 1:15-20

Luke 24:44-53

want to hear about social issues in the context of faith.

Psalm 148 echoes Psalm 8 reminding us that that we fit into something so vast and yet God is mindful of us.

The ascension of Jesus to the Cosmos provides a fitting conclusion to the three-year Season of Creation series. Ponder the Cosmos as capstone to the whole Season of Creation.

Empire is still present, but the people are given this moment filled with blessing and joy.

Just as Jesus sends the people into all the world, so too are we sent into every aspect of Creation with joy and gladness to foster life as we have been given life in Christ.

For those who may see the ascension of Jesus as God's escape from the world, it is important to make clear that this is not the case.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Cosmos

### Fruits for Preaching

*Stories, Anecdotes and Citations*

An interesting story about photographing Pluto recently came from the popular NPR show, *Moth Radio Hour*, told by Cathy Olkin

(<https://themoth.org/radio-hour/the-universe-of-impossible-things>)

Space is becoming a junkyard for all the waste of the astro-tech industry. Russia recently destroyed one of their satellites, sending refuse in every direction. A SpaceX rocket is on a collision course with the moon. Starlink satellites create light pollution for sky-gazers and animals alike. How does our pollution of the cosmos have an impact on Creation?

There is an asteroid floating along behind the earth in the same orbit, and it will be there for an estimated 4000 more years, just floating along behind us as we orbit the Sun. See the article linked here:

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/scientists-discover-rare-asteroid-that-follows-earth-in-orbit/ar-AAtpPJd?ocid=msedgdhp&pc=U531>

Connected to last week's theme of Storms: "The term "space weather" refers to the variable conditions on the sun and in space that can influence the performance of technology we use on Earth. Extreme space weather could potentially cause damage to critical infrastructure – especially the electric grid – highlighting the importance of

being prepared." (Found at <https://www.ready.gov/space-weather> on 2/3/2022)

When stargazing with his family, one pastor's daughter asked if our sun would last forever. The pastor told her the truth, that one day our sun will burn out. For the daughter, it didn't matter that this wouldn't happen for billions of years. The idea was overwhelming and upsetting! Someday our star, the Sun, will die. How does that affect us? How might children respond to such news?

Woman Wisdom is an ideal model for public ecofeminist theology because of her gender, her intimate connection with Creation, and her boldness in entering the public places of human society to engage all those who will listen and be brought into her service of all Creation. Laura Hobgood-Oster observes, "subversive ideas emerge from Wisdom literature and in these subversions Earth's perspective can find a justice-oriented worldview for all Earth's inhabitants and for Earth herself" (Laura Hobgood-Oster, "Wisdom Literature and Ecofeminism," in *The Earth Story in Wisdom Traditions*, ed. Norman C. Habel & Shirley Wurst, The Earth Bible [Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 2001, 38]).

What implications does Wisdom have for the Church in its task of public theology? If the Church follows Wisdom's lead, we will also locate ourselves at

the busiest corners and crossroads where the public gathers for business and social meetings. The Church will issue invitations on behalf of Wisdom to become disciples of her teachings. And the Church will not mince words about the consequences of turning away from her instruction. The Church will invite disciples of Wisdom to enter her house, her oikos, the very Creation-home itself. This is where they will learn from her the most profound and life-giving teachings.

**Cosmos Sunday**  
**Season of Creation 4**  
*Year C*

**Proverbs 8:22-31**

**Psalm 148**

**Colossians 1:15-20**

**Luke 24:44-53**

Psalm 148 depicts "the great Creation choir." What is the role of humanity in this choir? It is not to dominate Creation, but rather to call all Creation to praise. Like the officiating priest in the temple,

like the cantor in the synagogue, like the music director in the church, our role in the Cosmos is liturgical leadership.

If our role is to "enable all creation to render unhindered praise to God," as Brown puts it (74), this has ramifications for our ecological ethics. We must completely reorder our way of living, eating, transporting, heating and cooling, electrifying, and making goods. Our orienting question must be: Does this activity hinder this being's or entity's ability or capacity for praising God? This is not to say we must return to "living in caves" as opponents of ecological living say in their red-herring arguments. Rather, it means that we must ensure

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Cosmos

that, at bare minimum, the processes of life that ensure sustained and healthy living into the future are maintained. In other words, from the tiniest microbes to the tallest mountains to Earth's atmosphere, our guiding principle must be one of enabling God's praise.

Lyrics from Jesus Christ Superstar, "Hosanna:" "Nothing can be done to stop the shouting / if every tongue were still / the noise would still continue. / The rocks and stones themselves would start to sing!"

If a mining company cuts off the top of a mountain to get to the coal, one could say they have restricted the mountain's ability to praise. The same can be asked when forests are destroyed by fire or logging, and when the ocean is polluted. Our destruction of nature limits how nature can give glory to God.

When astronauts see the Earth suspended in the cosmos, they experience a change in perspective called the Overview Effect. From this, they have a deeper appreciation for the fragility and connectedness of our world. See the short film, *Overview* on Vimeo:

<http://vimeo.com/55073825>. Actor William Shatner famously commented on this after his brief flight to space:

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/10/13/william-shatner-speech-to-jeff-bezos-after-blue-origin-launch.html>

To consider the Overview Effect, listen to Carl Sagan's Pale Blue Dot speech, from the intro to the book of the same name: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GO5FwsblpT8>. In this speech, he reflects on an image of Earth taken from far beyond the orbit of Neptune.

Jesus was present at the dawn of Creation, and he came in human form to redeem us. Compare the vastness of the Cosmos to how God loves us specifically (Psalm 8, Isaiah 44:24, etc). One could spend the majority of the sermon on the complexities of the universe, then bring it back to how God loves us, knows us, and cares for us.

St. Francis' canticle of Brother Sun, Sister Moon, was influenced by Psalm 148. There are picture books that use these words that may be of use.

<https://ignatiansolidarity.net/blog/2015/06/04/canticle-of-brother-sun-and-sister-moon-of-st-francis-of-assisii/>

*Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord, All praise is Yours, all glory, all honour and all blessings.  
To you alone, Most High, do they belong, and no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.  
Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun,  
Who is the day through whom You give us light. And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour, of You Most High, he bears the likeness.*



*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, and fair and stormy, all weather's moods, by which You cherish all that You have made.*

*Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water, so useful, humble, precious and pure.*

*Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire, through whom You light the night and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.*

*Praised be You my Lord through our Sister, Mother Earth who sustains and governs us, producing varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

*Praise be You my Lord through those who grant pardon for love of You and bear sickness and trial.*

*Blessed are those who endure in peace, By You Most High, they will be crowned.*

*Praised be You, my Lord through Sister Death, from whom no-one living can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Blessed are they She finds doing Your Will.*

*No second death can do them harm. Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks, And serve Him with great humility.*

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Cosmos

If we substitute Caesar with today's "thrones or dominions or rulers or powers," what entities or people might fit this idolatrous attitude? What or who wants people to believe that they are the immutable, unchallengeable, irrefutable image of the invisible God? Consider topics and terms people don't want to hear mentioned in sermons. If we believe certain things cannot be challenged or even discussed because they're "too political" or "too divisive," that is an indicator of idolatry at work. These powers have a lot at stake in the church staying quiet and not engaging in theological and biblical critique of them. Terms like "Climate Change" and "Environment" are perceived as more political than the term, "God's Creation." While the latter may be less controversial and easier for the congregation to hear, more direct terms can have a stronger impact, when used judiciously.

Consider the mystery of dark matter. There is something unobservable that holds the universe together with gravity. In fact, scientists have estimated that up to 85% of all mass is dark matter. This invisible mass is only known because of its gravitational effect on the visible universe.

This Sunday can be an opportunity to bring back artifacts from the previous three Sundays – the montage of lakes (Ocean and Lake Sunday), the poster of animals and an update on how much was raised for local animal shelters or nature preserves (Animals Sunday), an update on how much the church has given to disaster response (Storm Sunday). Maybe even bring in items or updates from the previous two years of doing the Season of Creation. Thus, the church can celebrate not just the culmination of this Season of Creation, but the whole three-year cycle. All the while, we are assured that just

as on the day of Ascension when Jesus rose to his rightful place in the cosmos, he is blessing us, and we are filled with great joy as we bless God.

A short story by Ray Bradbury, "The Man," from his collection *The Illustrated Man* tells of an astronaut from earth who lands on another planet. Its inhabitants are unfazed by his presence, because they have just witnessed their version of Christ, who recently ascended.

Every element was formed within a star. The reactions that create the immense heat and light of stars cause atoms to fuse into new forms of matter. When a star dies those new elements are spread into the universe, to be formed into new stars and planets. The atoms that make up every living thing and every atom on our planet were forged in the hearts of stars. The whole Earth, including your very body, is the result of the life and death of countless stars throughout billions of years.

### For the Kids

- Reflect on the light of the stars and how old that light is. The light from the closest star (besides the sun) is 4.2 years old. But the light of many of the stars we see at night is 100's and even over 1000 years old! The God of the Cosmos cares deeply for all of those stars and for each of us individually.
- *When God Made Light* by Matthew Paul Turner (Waterbrook, 2018)
- In preparation for, or as a follow up to Cosmos Sunday, plan a "night walk" with youth and other members of the congregation to discern how the cosmos praises God. How are the levels of light pollution in your area? Visit the International Dark-Sky Association for "Light Pollution Solutions": <https://www.darksky.org/light-pollution/light-pollution-solutions/>. Stargazing apps like Sky Guide are helpful and enlightening, as they help to identify what's in the night sky.
- For a children's message, use the images from NASA below to take children on a journey through the solar system, which zooms in on Earth. End with pictures of folks from your congregation, and talk about how the God who created the universe also created each of us.
  - Pale Blue Dot:
  - Day the Earth Smiled: [https://www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/cassini/multimedia/pia17171.html](https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/cassini/multimedia/pia17171.html)
  - Earthrise: [https://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image\\_feature\\_1249.html](https://www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image_feature_1249.html)

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Creation (C) – Cosmos

Cosmos Sunday Hymn Suggestions	Gathering	Song of Day	Offering/Communion	Sending
A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing! ELW #393		X	X	X
Come, Join the Dance of Trinity, ELW #412	X	X		X
By Your Hand You Feed Your People, ELW #469			X	
O God of Light, ELW #507			X	
Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies, ELW #553	X			
O Zion, Haste, ELW #668				X
Creating God Your Fingers Trace, ELW #684		X	X	X
God Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens, ELW #771	X	X		X
How Marvelous God's Greatness, ELW #830	X			X
All Creatures, Worship God Most High! ELW #835	X	X		X
Many and Great, O God, ELW #837		X	X	
Golden Breaks the Dawn, ELW #852		X	X	
When Long Before Time, ELW #861	X	X		
Praise Ye the Lord, ELW #872	X			X
Let the Whole Creation Cry, ELW #876	X			X
O God Beyond All Praising, ELW #880	X			X
Now the Heavens Start to Whisper, ACS #901	X		X	
Come and See the Ways of Wisdom, ACS #971		X	X	
The Word Who Sang the Light into Creation, ACS #973		X	X	
The Night You Gave Us, ACS #994	X	X	X	
In Sacred Manner, ACS #1071		X	X	
How Shall I Sing that Majesty, ACS #1095	X	X	X	

### Prayer of the Day

God of the Cosmos, your Son and Spirit were present in the beginning. Your creative touch includes the Earth and the farthest reaches of the universe. Give us humility to understand our place in Creation and assurance that you love us even when we feel insignificant. In the name of the Triune God. **Amen.**

### Star Facts

- The light from Proxima Centauri, the closest star to Earth other than the Sun, is 4.2 years old
- Polaris, better known as the North Star, is 430 light years away meaning the light you see as you look at it left the star 430 years ago – before the Pilgrims ventured to the Americas!
- The stars of the big dipper are about 80 light years away.
- The farthest star we can see with our naked eye is 16,308 light years away or more than...  
*87,000,000,000,000,000 miles*

### Get Up & Go

*Places in and around the NIS to visit in relation to Cosmos Sunday*

- Visit Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat Center in Wheatland, Iowa ([www.chmiowa.org](http://www.chmiowa.org)) and go on their Cosmic Walk. This is a path through their prairie that has stones that mark the creation of the world using scientific and biblical moments. Because the stones are spaced out appropriately, it gives a sense of the vast amount of time it took for the universe and our planet to be created and bear life.
- Plan a trip to the Adler Planetarium in Chicago.
- Seek out places that are free of light pollution so that you can view the night skies in all their glory. Two places accessible to members of the Northern Illinois Synod (though neither is actually in the boundaries of the synod) are Middle Fork River Forest Preserve in Champaign County, IL (a Dark Sky Park) and Siloam Springs State Park in Clayton, IL.

# The Team

We have completed the three year cycle through the Season of Creation lectionary. Though I can claim the original vision of this booklet, I cannot take credit for the final product. It has been a collaborative effort of three very intelligent, creative, and talented teams that has resulted in what you have at your disposal.

It was unfortunate that we had meet via Zoom again this year, but the team did not let some tiny little invisible virus get in their way of creating opportunities to give praise to our Creator and look with awe upon Creation. This year's team is pictured and listed below. A special shout out to Jamie, Julie, Carol, and Robert who put up with Leah and I all three years.

On behalf of Leah, Robert, Jamie, Becky, Chad, Julie, Ken, and Carol, I pray that you and your congregation find this resource a blessing, that your worship life is enhanced by Season of Creation, and most importantly, that people are encouraged to live with and serve all of God's grand Creation.

Peace,  
Jeff Schlesinger



## Editor

Rev. Jeff Schlesinger - Pastor, Heart of Illinois Lutheran Parish – Immanuel Lutheran, Compton & First Lutheran, Lee, IL

## Theological Director

Rev. Dr. Leah Schade - Associate Professor, Lexington Theological Seminary, Lexington, KY

## Contributors

Rev. Robert Franek – Interim Pastor, Trinity Lutheran, Valley City, ND  
Rev. Jamie Gallagher – Pastor, First Lutheran, Monmouth, IL  
Ms. Becky Keller – Immanuel Lutheran, Earlville, IL  
Rev. Chad McKenna – St. Mark Lutheran, Rockford, IL  
Rev. Julie Monnard – Pastor, Calvary Lutheran, New Windsor, IL  
Mr. Ken Reinhardt – Salem Lutheran, Sycamore, IL  
Rev. Carol Soderholm – Retired, Mt. Morris, IL

## **Credits and Permissions**

Scripture lessons and references, with the exception of the Psalms and where otherwise noted, are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible (NRSV), Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The Psalm texts are the translation from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and are used by permission. Copyright © 2006 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

All photos in these resources are ©Jeff Schlesinger unless otherwise noted. Permission is granted to use them for worship, study and other non-profit ventures related to Season of Creation. For permission for other uses please contact the photographer at [photo.pastor1965@gmail.com](mailto:photo.pastor1965@gmail.com).

## **Additional Resources**

1. Habel, Rhoads and Santmire, eds. *The Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011.
2. <http://www.letallcreationpraise.org/season-of-creation>
3. <https://seasonofcreation.com>
4. <http://www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org>
5. <http://www.bibleandecology.org>
6. <http://www.webofcreation.org>

## **Helping the Cause**

If you found this resource helpful please forward comments and suggestions to [photo.pastor1965@gmail.com](mailto:photo.pastor1965@gmail.com). We are still in need of some funds to finishing paying off expenses for this project. If you or your congregation are able to provide a donation to help alleviate these expenses it would be deeply appreciated. Funds are being handled by one of Pastor Jeff Schlesinger's congregations. Make checks payable to "First Lutheran Church" and put "Season of Creation Retreat" in the memo line. Mail them to First Lutheran Church, 240 Hardanger Gate, Lee, IL 60530.